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Title of Thesis: Desiring Intersubjects: Lesbian Poststructuralism in Writing by Nicole Brossard, Daphne Marlatt, and Dionne Brand

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Year this Degree Granted: 2000

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Desiring Intersubjects: Lesbian Poststructuralism in Writing
by Nicole Brossard, Daphne Marlatt, and Dionne Brand

by

M. Ellen Quigley



A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

Edmonton, Alberta
Spring 2000

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Desiring Intersubjects: Lesbian Poststructuralism in Writing by Nicole Brossard, Daphne Marlatt, and Dionne Brand" submitted by M. Ellen Quigley in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Abstract

Ellen Quigley focuses on Nicole Brossard's *Le désert mauve* (1987; trans. 1990), Daphne Marlatt's *Taken* (1996), and Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* (1996) in the context of other works by these writers and various poststructuralist theories. These lesbian Canadian (Marlatt and Brand) and Québécoises (Brossard) feminist ficto-theorists enable Quigley to construct a poststructuralist theory of desiring intersubjectivity. She reads the political, linguistic, and theoretical negotiations of fiction and theory in these novels against several existing poststructuralist theories in order to deconstruct the masculinist and heterosexist bias that pervades academically sanctioned poststructuralism while still resisting the originary subject in Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory of a pre-Oedipal *chora*. Quigley's rhizomatic methodology follows what Pamela Banting calls an "interlanguage." She draws on the deconstructions of Jacques Derrida (philosophic and linguistic), Gayatri Spivak (Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial), Homi Bhabha (postcolonial and cultural), Luce Irigaray and Kelly Oliver (feminist ethics and philosophic), Judith Butler (gender), and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (Marxist, anti-psychoanalytic, and anti-philosophic) and intercuts Marilyn Farwell's theory of lesbian narratology. Quigley argues that the influence of affirmative postcolonial and French deconstructions in lesbian ficto-theory in Canada and Québec refuses the decentred death-of-the-subject and creates a "para-centrality" (Spivak) of vital lesbian intersubjects that are not substances, subjects, or representational objects but quantum energies that paralogically spin out of sedentary molecular orbits and categorical locations and decolonize and uncommodify subjectivity, desire, and thought. The contradictory partial signs on the surfaces of corporeality, language, readers/writers, and subjects/objects

maintain a specificity of micropolitical issues in a nonfoundational coalition politics. Following a section on her theoretical negotiations, Quigley examines separately the works of Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand. Each section is divided into three parallel chapters that focus on deconstructing originary subjects, a mobile interlanguage that challenges categorical distinctions, and the need for what Deleuze and Guattari call a war machine of analytical violence to demolish the violent categorical constitution of the subject and open subjectivity to quantum probabilities that will enable the affirmative, ethical, and loving connections of a mobile, transgressive, poststructuralist intersubjectivity.

Preface

By reading the political, linguistic, and theoretical negotiations of fiction and theory in Nicole Brossard's *Le désert mauve* (1987; trans. 1990), Daphne Marlatt's *Taken* (1996), and Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* (1996), I will explore the way a lesbian "interlanguage"¹ deconstructs the heteropatriarchal inscription of several existing poststructuralist theories. Not only does corporeality and a sexed body disappear into the regulation of gender in much poststructuralism, but an 'originary' subject (an ego) of linguistic and social regulation is resurrected in the guise of the death of the subject that can no longer protest from any position outside symbolic organization. The fiction and theory in the novels by Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand are still poststructuralist in nonfoundational principles. There is no pre-linguistic essence or pure concept of an originary subject's heterogeneous, disorganized body that challenges the organized objectification of symbolic representation. What is outside organization is not originary but proliferates in the mobile interconnections of language and materiality. These writers deploy signs of language and corporeality without the concept of a displaced, foundational meaning, origin, or intent. The bodies of an endless list of heterogeneous elements (such as corporeality, language, history, literature, geography, landscape,

¹Pamela Banting discusses the deconstructive drift and displacement of words as the creation of an interlanguage that negotiates with and deforms the "source language" (SL) but has no "target language" (TL) for final translation. Her feminist and poetic sense of an "interlanguage" derives from translation theory. She acknowledges:

The term "interlanguage," coined by Larry Selinker in 1972 and further developed by Gideon Toury, refers to the linguistic interference from the mother tongue (SL) during a second-language learner's attempted production of the target language (TL). An interlanguage "enjoys an intermediate status between SL and TL" (Toury 1980, 71). (13)

nation) appear as heterogeneous signs without representational depth on the “surfaces of sense” (Brossard).² An intensive energy and movement in the return to the sites of between-women production causes the signs of these sites to intersect, derail each other from an organized reproduction of systemic sense, and create intersubjects.³ A lesbian desiring intersubjectivity emerges as an affirmative series of becomings rather than evacuations. As the constitutive elements of subject formation explode into quantum particles with no inherent meaning (substance) outside their force of connection, intersubjects emerge in the drift and connection of particles. In an affirmative deconstruction that has no originary subject, the quantum activity of intersubjectivity

²The phrase “surfaces of sense” comes from the title of Fiona Strachan’s translation of Brossard’s *Le sens apparent*.

³I borrow the terms “intersubject” and “intersubjectivity” from Kelly Oliver, who draws on Derrida’s distinction between violence and constitutive forces that do not necessarily violate: “. . . if we replace the Hegelian model, perhaps we can envision a model of intersubjectivity that can account for the so-called violence of the negotiation between self and other without requiring that that violence be directed towards the other.” The Hegelian idea that all intersubjective relations are violent, she argues, “operates on the myth of self-presence or the proper” and the “appropriation of the properly proper [that is, individuality, singularity]” (99). Oliver’s idea of an intersubjectivity where “ego boundaries are permeable and we are all in a constant process of exchanging psychic energies and affects” (196) through “contact and conversation” (196) resonates with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s theory of a body without organs in which language, bodies, ideas, programs create an individual (not a psychoanalytically individuated subject), although they more thoroughly dismiss ego-organization than does Oliver. My use of *intersubjectivity* is an attempt to bring the feminist philosophy of Oliver that insists on an intersubjective relation between mother and child together with the anti-philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari to speak a subjectivity that no longer has a subject who independently directs cultural performances, a subjectivity that does not pass through the mirror phase of *méconnaissance*. Nor is there a subjectivity in which the psychoanalytic super-ego organizes and represses bodily drives. Such Oedipal regulation in these novels is seen as the coding of oppressive social organization by affective energy that makes such organization appear desirous. Intersubjectivity functions not just between people, but between the interactions of body-language, fiction-theory, past-present, nation-diaspora-colonization. Intersubjectivity occurs in the polysemy of rhizomatic drift.

challenges the separation of categorical bodies/languages, subjects/objects, insides/outside, and explodes the violent categorical constraints of social and linguistic organization to enable new connections of nonfoundational proximity rather than identity.

What is postmodern lesbian writing in Canada and Québec after the Barthesian “Death of the Author”? Have the revisions of poststructuralist theory by lesbian and feminist Québécoises writers influenced lesbian Canadian literature in a way unlike the tradition of separate solitudes in Québécoises and Canadian culture and letters? Does the erotic energy of lesbian writing translating normative social and literary paradigms into differently embodied desires and subjectivities create a desire for translation that is still marked by, but has no fidelity to, the originary nation, language, theory, or culture? Does the search for traces of a lesbian erotics within other theories, other material languages, other cultural rhetorics, and other bodies translate to the desire to create a language that does not yet exist? Is there such a thing as a “lesbian interlanguage” that can never exist as an object, a substance, a thing, because linguistic energy leaps between quantum particles in reading/writing? These are some of the questions that propel my thinking about lesbian postmodern writing in Canada and Québec.

Versions of these and other questions have been haunting me since at least 1983 at the Women and Words Conference in Vancouver, or in 1984 at Barbara Godard’s Dialogue Conference that eventually founded *Tessera*. When I joined the lesbian manuscript group and the politically fraught (non)collective, (non)board of members in the Publishing and Policy group at Women’s Press in Toronto, run by a largely white, largely middle-class group of women in 1984, we tried to put nonfoundational theory into practice. As part of a feminist press attempting to amend numerous social exclusions by

broadening the active membership, contributors, and publications, The Lesbian Writing and Publishing Collective refused to delimit the terms of lesbian writing. Practically speaking, many manuscripts would arrive with no bodies attached, and we had no way of verifying whether the writer was even a woman, let alone a lesbian or a woman who had been or was about to become lesbian, a bisexual woman who was sometimes lesbian, or a woman who repressed her lesbian attractions. Nor did we want to define categories of lesbianism or limit lesbian writing to representation in such genres as the coming-out story and romantic quest or love-torn strife. Brand's engagement with language in *No Language Is Neutral* (1990) pushed the question of lesbian translation into a postcolonial and racial context that we were looking for in the publication of *Dyke words* (1990). We were honoured to include the poem from "Hard Against the Soul" that begins *No Language Is Neutral* ["this is you girl . . ."] just as the book was about to be published. This poem does not represent lesbian attraction or describe lesbianism, but the erotic intensity of the language and the repetition of "this is you girl" brings the reader into an intersubjective lesbian relation with the speaker of this "poem no woman / ever write for a woman because she 'fraid to touch" (*No Language Is Neutral* 7; *Dyke words* 10). Somehow, a text had to be lesbian to be considered by the manuscript group, but we could not define what that meant. When I look back to the evaluation of each piece, what we were considering was the affective energy that makes political and emotional sense in the meeting between signs of bodies and language.

In the 1980s, I did not really understand Nicole Brossard's challenges to structuralist and poststructuralist patriarchal colonizations of languages, bodies, and desires, but I recognized a glimmering lesbian presence in the interwoven corporeal and

discursive bodies in her fiction théorique. Poststructuralist and lesbian minds, bodies, and texts meet in her work in a shifting positionality that affirms the fictional relations of signs that create experiential knowledge. Experience and construction meet. In 1978-79 as a lesbian undergraduate student, I examined Daphne Marlatt's explosion of the word and the conventional narrative frame in *FRAMES of a story* (1974), recognizing her creation of a textual between-women desire that challenges the organized enclosure of women in an organized narrative frame. Following this work, I waited for her to come out. In 1993 I wrote my MA thesis on lesbian presence in the language of her work before *Taken*. When Marlatt, Brossard, Betsy Warland, and others planning the Women and Words conference began to speak of what I call here a lesbian and feminist "desiring writing" in the collaborative context of work between Canadian and Québécoises writers and theorists, I had to attend.

Unfortunately, the meeting of anglophone and francophone minds has not always been productive. Marlene Wildeman's translation of Brossard's *La lettre aérienne* (1985), *The Aerial Letter* (1988), becomes a pillory post for Annamarie Jagose's castigation of lesbian essentialism. Jagose follows an Americanist interpretation of Michel Foucault in her *Lesbian Utopics* (1994) to argue that Brossard's use of the female body establishes an impossible, originary, and unified lesbian space outside discourse to evade the necessarily patriarchal regulation of language. At times, Wildeman's translation of Brossard's *La lettre aérienne* reduces the complexity of Brossard's linguistic interweaving of inside and outside, body and discourse, and fiction and theory that create a lesbian postmodern praxis. But her translation cannot simplistically be dismissed. *The Aerial Letter* is witness to the early intermingling of lesbian and feminist Canadian and Québécoise writing and

theory that has become an important field of investigation and informs the topic of my own dissertation. In 1987 I jumped at the chance to speak as a lesbian in the otherwise heterosexual translation manuscript group at Women's Press that produced *The Aerial Letter*. Wildeman spoke to the need in Canada for accessible French feminist theory and the growing excitement of lesbian-feminist writing in Canada desiring such trans-gressive trans-(e)lation⁴ that the lesbian ficto-theory of the novels I examine enact with sophistication.

This fascination of a transgressive feminist connection with poststructuralism prompted me to look at the different methodologies connected to deconstruction. Jacques Derrida and Jeffrey T. Nealon argue that deconstruction is not a methodology since the approaches and issues of investigation differ in various strategies of analysis. Yet a radical investigation of the politics of language also connects psychoanalysis, philosophy, Marxism, and semiotic, gender, feminist, cultural, and postcolonial theories into a rhizomatic methodology that aims, through strategic differences, to deconstruct originary substance and truth. By examining a nonoriginary, linguistic production and regulation of the subject, these different deconstructive methodologies push toward a decolonization of

⁴Susan Holbrook discusses the "beauty and revolt" in Daphne Marlatt's linguistic "trans-gressions" in *Salvage*. Holbrook writes:

In order to preserve the generative notion of translation, as well as the shit-kicking force of aggression, I have retained the hyphen between 'trans' and 'gression.' Feminist linguistic subversion involves the shove of trans-gression, a gesture which embraces and moves between both Montse's word-killing [her female English-as-a-second-language student] and the translator's experience of attraction. Marlatt kicks shit in 'Salvage,' trans-gresses, pushes the limits of how we can speak and imagine our striking selves. (17)

To convey the excitement as well as aggression of this "striking" vocabulary that Holbrook describes, I use the hyphenated desiring terms *trans-gressive trans-(e)lation* that move toward all of these differences at once.

language, bodies, classes, sexes, genders, races, and nations without presuming any pre-colonial, pre-Oedipal, pre-capitalist, or pre-heteropatriarchal origins. This rhizomatic agenda of deregulating sense by attacking organization on many fronts and through many field of disciplinary analysis establishes the nonfoundational interlanguage these novels deploy. The rhizomatic and transgressive interlanguage of Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand moves between heterogeneous fictions and theories on a horizontal plane in which all theoretical propositions are the fictions invested with affective use-value that make reality, or at least what is taken as reality, which in the dissolution of originary truth in poststructuralist theory is all there is. Signs (on the surfaces of corporeality and language) divested of originary intent have no essential meaning (or truth) in themselves but begin to make sense as they meet and fly off in contextual negotiations. My own methodology moves between strategically located and politically different aspects of deconstruction without fidelity to the systemic whole of their disciplinary and methodological fields. This noisy, rhizomatic, discursive chorus of theory enables me to formulate a poststructuralist theory of intersubjectivity that, like the fiction-theory of the writers I examine, moves on the horizontal plane of linguistic fictions that connect literary criticism with a philosophic investigation of the linguistic real.

Part I, "Toward a Desiring Intersubjectivity," is divided into four sections. In "Introduction: The Politics of an Intersubjective Lesbian Fiction-Theory," I outline the main theoretical transgressions and issues I address in order to develop a theory of poststructuralist intersubjectivity. In "Rhizomatic Connections," I describe the connections between heterogeneous deconstructive theories that enable me to make the transgressive leaps. In "Issues," I begin to focus the particular differences of a lesbian and

feminist negotiation with these already heterogenous theories. Finally, in “Canadian and Québécoise Affirmative Deconstruction,” I address the Québécoise influence of French and continental poststructuralist thought on lesbian and feminist deconstruction in Canada, which distinguishes it from the Anglo-American influence of deconstruction and poststructuralism in mainstream Canadian postmodernism. Rather than writing the death of the decentred subject, Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand practise a deconstructive vitalism that enables unstable intersubjects to grow, emerge, and proliferate.

In “The Politics of an Intersubjective Lesbian Fiction-Theory,” I discuss the tension between the lesbian ficto-theory these writers practise and an academically sanctioned poststructuralism. This tension leads me to investigate the difference between the phallogocentric echoes that persist in a negative poststructuralist evacuation of the subject (and foundational truths) and the affirmative, feminist intersubjectivity in the writing of Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand that creates new, mobile positions without subjects, objects, or originary truths. On the “surfaces of sense” (Brossard) where truths are all fictions and vice versa, an *antifoundational* poststructuralism modulates into a *nonfoundational* coalition politics of multiplicity, partiality, specificity, and contradiction. With no statement of unity, identity, or intent, a nonfoundational, affirmative poststructuralism includes corporeality and language among other signs that reveal the material specificity of political and strategic difference that enables negotiation. In the absence of the controlling gaze of the subject, this material specificity of difference derails systemic enclosure in the self-same. The theory of a nonfoundational coalition becomes analogous to Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of molecularity in a deterritorialized “body without organs.” However, it differs in the need to retain specificity. Rather than

following Deleuze and Guattari into a free floating, nonspecific “immanence,” I deploy the deterritorialization of quantum physics. In order for quantum elements to spin out of their orbit around a nucleus, the increasing momentum of high energy interactions first binds the particles tighter to the nucleus. In my deconstructive theory, the signs (as particle elements) bind tighter to the representational sites (nuclei that are not identifiable substances) that categorically inscribe between-women production. This intensity and magnification shows the contradiction within such categories as bodies and languages, which reveals that these nuclei are only fictionally inscribed as categorical substances. As intensive movement speeds up, categorical signs fly out of containment and mix. This quantum destabilization of signs in between-women production retains liminal connection with molecular substances while refusing a representational definition of the impossibly pure, categorical element (body or language) in itself. In a nonfoundational lesbian writing, the quantum relations of particles change the molecular substance of the elements in coalitional relation while maintaining the nuclear core that continues to resonate the specificity of deterritorialized flight. From this nonfoundational politics of interrelation that emerges within and between individuals, I argue that my theory of lesbian poststructuralist intersubjectivity must cover enough ground to deregulate its own theoretical production into a rhizomatics that resists the reduction of radical differences between the social and linguistic politics and philosophies of the three novelists.

In chapter 2, “Rhizomatic Connections,” I discuss some of the shared premises of various deconstructive theorists that enable me to translate across the differences of their theories and produce a rhizomatic, deconstructive theory. I engage the philosophic, linguistic, and literary deconstruction of Jacques Derrida, the feminist, philosophic, and

psychoanalytic deconstructions of Luce Irigaray, the queer performative, philosophic, and psychoanalytic deconstructions of Judith Butler, the postcolonial, linguistic, literary, philosophic, and psychoanalytic deconstruction of Homi Bhabha, the Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial deconstruction of Gayatri Spivak, and the Marxist, anti-psychoanalytic, and anti-philosophic deconstruction of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Each theorist focuses on different deconstructive issues in the development of agency and political change without an organizing subject. Yet the fields of Marxist, linguistic, psychoanalytic, philosophic investigation inscribe intersubjective touchpoints on which poststructuralist differences can cross and connect without fidelity to authorial intent. For example, Derrida insists that “il n’y a pas de hors-texte” and dismisses anything outside linguistic displacement. Yet Deleuze and Guattari contradict this, arguing that a sublation of corporeality by language enacts an imperialist, Oedipal sublimation of difference. While these differences seem incommensurable, Spivak uses the theory of Deleuze and Guattari as part of her Marxist critique of Derrida’s limited understanding of use-value. Her discussion of the Oedipal construction of capitalism not only challenges Derrida’s Eurocentric politics of desire for the other but also brings feminist considerations of the gendered inscriptions of class into the blind-spots of Deleuze and Guattari’s anti-Oedipal theory. Like Spivak, my rhizomatic use of these theorists picks up elements and pushes them into conversation with other theories. Between deconstructive approaches to Marxism, psychoanalysis, philosophy, semiotics, feminist ethics, lesbian narratology, and postcolonial theory, I develop an anti-Oedipal critique of the commodification and colonization of language, bodies, and desire that enables me to read the poststructuralist linguistic politics of Canadian and Québécoise, postcolonial hybridities in an anti-

capitalist and anti-sexist, lesbian “desiring writing.”

A “desiring writing” (Parker) does not expose an existing truth that is hidden by the psychoanalytic *méconnaissance* of language. It is an affirmative production of new meaning through nonfoundational signs of sense. These lesbian-feminist writers do not deconstruct categorical identities simply in order to evacuate concepts of gendered, racial, and national struggles as impossibilities that reveal what Jacques Derrida calls the “truth of untruth.” Instead, Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand examine the contradictions suppressed in the violence of categorical regulation in order to develop new, shifting intersubjects among the multiple truths of what François Lyotard calls the “petits récits.” The term *poststructuralism* contains many different methodologies, all of which hinge on the negation of an originary substance or essential subject prior to language. Rather than the poststructuralist pretense of a binary inside/outside or body/language that then eliminates the originary term by arguing there is nothing outside language and law, I follow the rhizomatic poststructuralist theory of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who argue that all systems of knowledge are plugged into the chaos of an enormous outside that one can never know in advance of its systemic deregulation. Such translation between theories enacts the affirmative deconstruction of an interlanguage that Derrida argues starts meaning and language moving. The systemic or categorical deconstruction that Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand deploy is not a ‘death’ (of the subject, of the outside) but a deterritorialization that increases the number of elements available in the quantum field for intersubjective production.

Deleuze and Guattari’s nomadic theory of desiring production in a body without organs is a fundamental tenant in my theory of an affirmative, lesbian, poststructuralist

intersubjectivity that changes the real. I examine Deleuze and Guattari's theory of desire more thoroughly in the subsections "The Schizoanalysis of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari" and "The Relation of Anti-Oedipus to Language and Desire" of chapters 2 and 3, "Rhizomatic Connections" and "Issues." But, put simply, Deleuze and Guattari's theory of desire enables me to dismiss the psychoanalytic theory of desire as a movement of fantasy toward completion and fullness. Desire, they argue, is not created by an originary separation or attraction that pulls a subject toward a fantasy object that represents a displaced originary plenitude of conjunction. Instead, desire is an energy that is produced when different elements meet and create something other than either of the originals. What Alice Parker terms a "desiring writing" in her *Liminal Visions of Nicole Brossard* draws on a similar conception of desire that applies to each of the writers I examine. The materials of a "desiring writing," as I discuss in "The Politics of an Intersubjective Lesbian Fiction-Theory," are the quantum, mobile elements/forces of signs with no substantial meaning on the destabilized surfaces of language that spin out of original orbits, collide, and produce desire as a new, mobile interlanguage. "Desiring writing" produces an interweaving of corporeal and linguistic signs that make reality. A desiring production within such nonreferential language must appear on the surfaces rather than in a psychoanalytic depth of fantasy and separation from the original reference. The interlanguage of these writers arcs, abstracting to "another place, not here" (Brand). However, such displacement is not the phallogocentric desire for movement beyond the separation of the 'real' originary subject from its objectified *méconnaissance* in language. Instead, the arc of abstraction forms connections between the partial

presences⁵ of material signs that create new virtual elements that appear and disappear in

⁵Bodies and languages, typographical marks on the page and sounds, materials and concepts, inside and outside, chains of language within the text and chains that move outside of the specific text through the connection of words or intertextual allusions, the writer and the reader — all these are partial presences in the literary event that create fluid meaning or endless desiring production. They are not full presences or self-contained presences but always partial because the virtual event of the text occurs in the abstract connection between these elements that changes each. The virtual literary event is not a meeting beyond the linguistic event that inscribes the inadequate lack or inability of language to convey a transcendental meaning. In the context of an inadequate language, the reader would attempt to interpret beyond the *méconnaissance* of language in order to uncover the ultimate authorial intent that is hidden by the author's social location within the symbolic. In the context of the partiality of language, I, as reader, bring my own social and intertextual locations in language to bear upon the words in the text and create something new. In this theory of desiring production, I draw upon Deleuze and Guattari's theories of becoming molecular and becoming immanent. However, molecules do not really have the nomadic energy that they suggest, and I find "immanence" too free-floating. Instead, I draw on a becoming quantum in which the interaction between insubstantial elements changes both the interaction (force) and the particles (elements) that interact. Fritjov Capra suggests that even protons and neutrons are "composite objects; but the forces holding them together are so strong . . . that the relativistic picture has to be applied, where the forces are also particles" (86) and that, by rotating the angle of vision between the "cross channel" and the "direct channel" in "S-matrix theory," ". . . what appears as a force in one channel is manifest as an intermediate particle in the other" (288). The binding forces of a reading event and the partial elements that compose that event are not distinguishably separate. Similarly, it is impossible to assert a categorical separation between the body, as a field in which the intellectual and emotional reading act takes place, and the language in which it takes place. Describing the way the connections between "machines" — or concepts and objects that we see as categorically separate such as the breast and the mouth or the stomach and the intestines — create desire, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari write:

. . . there is always a flow-producing machine, and another machine connected to it that interrupts or draws off part of this flow (the breast — the mouth). And because the first machine is in turn connected to another whose flow it interrupts or partially drains off, the binary series is linear in every direction. Desire constantly couples continuous flows and partial objects that are by nature fragmentary and fragmented. Desire causes the current to flow, itself flows in turn, and breaks the flows. . . . Every "object" presupposes the continuity of a flow; every flow, the fragmentation of the object. (*Anti-Oedipus* 5-6)

Deleuze and Guattari also insist that the heterogenous elements in representation of voice and graphism means that there is no "full body," since "one is continually jumping from words to things, and from bodies to appellations." But the erasure of the body as a heterogenous element in representation enables the "despotic" signifier to assert social

the reading/writing act. Their “desiring writing” enacts an affirmative deconstruction that leaps between embodied sounds, words, concepts, and literary, economic, political, social, and cultural referents. These partial presences meet with a quantum energy that speeds up or excites⁶ the molecular components that separate readers and writers. A mutable and mobile intersubject, which is neither author nor reader, appears in the erotic and analytic creation produced when the author’s contextual (*corps + texte*)⁷ inscriptions meet the reader’s contextual inscriptions and transgress the binary and exclusive categories that psychoanalytic theory argues establish the subject. This desiring production in the writing of Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand inscribes a lesbian intersubjectivity in the reader that cannot be defined in advance of the particular reading/writing act and signs the readerly bodies in a lesbian struggle for political, linguistic, and social change, however momentary.

While in chapter 2, I identify points of similarity between the deconstructionists

regulation through the Oedipus complex of castration and lack that represses difference as the other of unknowable *méconnaissance* (*Anti-Oedipus* 203-09). I will discuss this in more detail in the section entitled “The Relation of Anti-Oedipus to Language and Desire.”

⁶My use of the verb *excite* draws on meanings provided by the philosophic argument that meanings gain importance or use-value from the emotional impact of a concept, as well as from quantum physics. Fritjov Capra writes that particles enter an “excited state” and speed up in orbit when the electrons are tightly bound to a nucleus: “. . . the tighter they are bound to the nucleus, the higher their velocity will be; in fact, the confinement of electrons in an atom results in enormous velocities of about 600 miles per second.” They can become so excited that they fly out of their original orbits (73). Similarly, the particles of writing and analysis in a lesbian “desiring writing” resist binary separation, fold together, and speed up so much that they fly out of their original categorical location.

⁷In *Amantes* and *Mauve* Brossard theorizes the meeting of corporeality and textuality in the “cortex,” where electrical energy flashes between neurons in the brain.

that enable connection, in chapter 3, “Issues,” I examine the points that cross, contest, and bring each other to a crisis. As Spivak argues, this activity is the deconstructive process that reveals the limits of each theoretical embodiment. My theory of desire, or of “desiring writing,” does not remain faithful to the theory of Deleuze and Guattari but enacts the deconstructive production of new concepts in its collision with Luce Irigaray’s theory of a loving, non-Hegelian ethics of sexual difference, Judith Butler’s antifoundational coalition politics, and quantum theory. While Irigaray’s ethics allow me to formulate a corporeality in language without the violent intercutting on which Deleuze and Guattari insist, this does not mean all violence can be simply left behind. Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of the war machine and Bhabha’s theory of the deadly gaze of the Medusa that resists interpellation supplement the passivity of love that Irigaray suggests with the deregulating force necessary to attack not bodies and languages but thought itself. What have been taken as the law of categorical bodies separated from language and the gendered, constitutive elements of subjectivity require a certain force to dislodge. The negotiation between feminist criticism, deconstruction, postcolonialism, Deleuzian poststructuralism, and Marxist politics enables me to formulate a lesbian, desiring intersubjectivity that becomes speakable in a rhizomatic transgression that reveals the possibilities and the limits of the contesting differences in each.

The intersubjective space between categories creates a nonfoundationalist lesbian-feminist politics, theory, and desire that has no controlling subject and refuses the solidity of bodies, languages, and thought. This porous resistance to the proper subject modifies the poststructuralist evacuation of the subject by emphasizing the affirmative deconstruction in the signs of multiple intersubjects (such as body, language, and

theoretical location) that have no essential meaning in themselves but begin to make sense as they meet, inscribe each other, and evacuate essential, original, categorical sense. Feminist theory has long posed the problem: how can we evacuate the subject before we have had the legitimate power of a subject? Rather than repeating the violent split of a metaphysical subject and reversing the poles to inscribe value in an experiential and corporeal reality that has been excised from patriarchal thought, the intersubject in the postmodern lesbian-feminist writers that I examine rejects the patriarchal ego-regulation through which the proper subject submerges or emerges. The problem with the psychoanalytic concept of division and distinction between self and other, body and language, is that it establishes a violent Hegelian separation that makes the other unknowable. In "Issues," I examine Irigaray's challenge to Derrida's call to the other through her non-Hegelian ethics that refuses self/other opposition. While this connects with what Bhabha and Spivak identify as postcolonial resistance to the terms of the colonizer's interpellation of the colonized other, Irigaray's theory of sexual difference still imperialistically inscribes sex as the measure of subjective difference and lesbianism as a transitional stage to be surpassed. By crossing this exclusionary practice with Bhabha's postcolonial theory on the hybrid space of cultural enunciation, Spivak's Marxist identification of the other's inscription by Western values, a deregulating Deleuzian nomadic body without organs, and Butler's coalition politics, Irigaray's non-Hegelian ethics can be pushed across multiple differences to address the multiple, partial signs that meet in an affirmative creation of desiring intersubjectivity in the writing of Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand. In accordance with Irigaray's theory of the emergence of something new between incommensurable positions, these postcolonial and hybrid

writers inscribe a becoming present of an embodied lesbian writing in a non-Hegelian intersection of multiple differences that are simultaneously political, erotic, and linguistic in their refusal of the self/other violence of categorical distinction and exclusion.

In “Canadian and Québécoise Desiring Deconstruction,” the last chapter of “Toward a Desiring Intersubjectivity,” I examine the intertwined development of anglophone and francophone feminist writing. The influence of Québécoise theory changes the direction of Canadian lesbian and feminist postmodernism from the deadening, fragmenting influence of Anglo-American deconstruction that Linda Hutcheon (*Canadian Postmodern*) and Frank Davey (*Reading Canadian Reading*) argue characterizes a Canadian postmodern. The political trajectory of an affirmative Derridean deconstruction that makes new thought, rather than simply evacuating the old in the aporia of contradiction, motivates the nonfoundational deconstruction of these lesbian and feminist writers.

My study of the literature in parts II, III, and IV focuses separately on the individual writers. Rather than combining the discussions of the three writers as I do in the following synthesis of my study, I separately examine three general issues for each author in order to maintain specificity in my textual, intertextual, and theoretical location of each writer. This separate examination of the authors is necessary for the development of a rhizomatic theory that does not reduce them to the same. Each of the sections is divided into three chapters that examine how each author’s “desiring writing” engages the interwoven issues of origins, the relation between body and language, and the need for an analytic violence or force that can demolish the violent and categorical constitution of the unary subject in order to open subjectivity to quantum probability lines that will enable

the affirmative, ethical, and loving connections of a mobile and transgressive, poststructuralist intersubjectivity.

I begin my textual analysis with a discussion of Nicole Brossard's 1987 text *Le désert mauve* because it clearly addresses the relation of lesbian and feminist bodies to the issues of deconstruction raised by Derrida, Irigaray, and Deleuze and Guattari and postulates the meaning of a deconstructive utopian horizon as a rhizomatic lesbian and feminist nonfoundational politics more clearly than her other works. Following an introduction to each section on an author, the first chapter in each study addresses the issue of origins. In these three chapters, I address Brossard's examination of the real impact of, and deregulation possible within, fictional origins, the lesbian ghost of the closet that haunts Marlatt's construction of a hybrid origin that arises between national and gendered cultural locations, and Brand's dialectical negation of the founding violence of originary location that addresses (without prejudice to Marlatt) the difference between the desire for the other in Marlatt's construction of hybridity and the demand to be and desire the other in Brand's. These different strategies enable the authors to open a space for the inscription of a lesbian "desiring writing" that refuses the relationship between desire and language as the castrating law-of-the-father that separates body from language but does not rely on an originary space outside language and cultural construction.

In the second chapter on each author, I examine the creation of an "interlanguage" that translates between body and language and has no subject, no object, no source, and no existing target text. By translating between the differences that inscribe a lesbian intersubject and refusing to settle in any singular location, the "desiring writing" of these authors enacts a nonfoundational coalition politics. In "Affirmative, Utopian, Lesbian

Deconstruction,” I examine this in Brossard’s text as a revision of the meaning of utopianism from an ideal ‘no place’ into the absence of a singular or coherent lesbian representational subject. Instead, a lesbian intersubject arises in the desiring drift between the particular and contra-dictory lesbian bodies in the words, the characters, and the fictional authors. A new kind of utopian hope emerges for “relancer le sens” (*Le désert mauve* 175) without the violence of oppositional inscription and exclusion that occurs in a representational definition of lesbian substance or subjects. The intersubjective desiring connections between the contra-dictory bodies of multiple languages and corporealities, very different mothers, daughters, and lovers, pasts and presents, insides and outsides, horizontal connections in language with no referent and vertical connections of language with thought, philosophy, and ethics create a becoming lesbian of the text that drifts toward female bodies and inscriptions without fidelity to systemic location or original foundation.

In “Holey Bodies and Languages” I look at the nonfoundational politics of already hybrid bodies, languages, and texts in Marlatt’s novel that prohibit a categorical lesbian subject from colonizing or recuperating the differences of national, cultural, and sexual hybridities. Yet the ghost of a lesbian closet discursively constructed in theories of hybridity continues to haunt the nonfoundational chains of “interlinguistic” and intersemiotic connection that form between the corporeal and linguistic bodies of women. These partial presences cannot be negated along with the negation of unified origin and identity.

In “Quantum Energy in Molecular Dialectics,” I examine the manner in which Brand also inscribes a nonfoundational lesbian politics that leaps between theory and

practice, abstraction and materiality, global movements and territorial locations. The continual attraction of quantum particles that cross between molecular locations of elemental difference inscribes a specificity in her revolutionary lesbian “interlanguage.” While her intersubject still has no subject or object, no source or existing target, a ghostly presence emerges out of absence in the continual drift between bodies, languages, and cultural locations. In each of these novels, a lesbian “desiring writing” moves between territorial claims of location that connect the lesbian intersubject with such bodies as nation, race, gender, sexual orientation, and language and deterritorialized acts of dislocation that prohibit any categorical enclosure. This double movement of naming specific and contingent locations for political agitation and desiring connection reveals the impossibility of territorial location to form any essential and incontrovertible foundation and enacts a catachrestic nominalism that uses strategic figures, or essentialisms, that enable speech and the development of thought without establishing exclusionary foundations.

In the third chapter of each section, I examine the need for an analytic and oppositional violence to deconstruct the categorical enclosures that violently constitute the subject through such binary oppositions as self/other, heterosexual/homosexual, male/female, and author/reader. Only after the second deconstructive move of opposition can the third deconstructive position move knowledge or sense somewhere other than the original binaries. In these novels, that third position is a desiring intersubjectivity. To describe the movement of opposition that does not simply inscribe the opposite side of the binary, I draw on Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of the war machine that attacks all sedentary alignments with state space and inscribes a transgressive, nomadic space. By

deconstructing categorical enclosures, the authors open a space for intersubjective connections that are prohibited and disabled by the violence of binary closure and categorical opposition. This space of quantum elements that spin off and temporarily bind in new orbits creates a postmodern lesbian desiring intersubjectivity that moves at the speed of light. Such speed can only exist in an intersubject that does not have the unified quality of a subject formed through the identification of sameness and difference. As these writers examine the irreducible difference within the same that cuts through the Hegelian violence of categorical alignment in the oppositional 'I'/'you,' speaker/spoken, and self/other, the sense of a mobile intersubjectivity in a lesbian "desiring writing" becomes the passionate intensity that inscribes and is inscribed upon the heterogeneous sites of language production between-women. This focus on intensive movement, rather than on content, inscribes a mobile lesbian interlanguage that cannot be defined as a categorical substance but emerges as diverse and strategic methods of negotiation.

In "Translation, the Loving War Machine of 'Délire,' and Intersubjectivity at the 'Speed of Light,'" I examine Brossard's translation between Angstelle's Lacanian/Derridean language and Laures's Deleuzian language that allows the unspeakable lesbian to become readable by exposing certain negotiations within the linguistic codes. Each must strategically hold the gaze to enact the negotiations that combat the violent inscription of women in patriarchal languages. Yet the lesbian "desiring writing," what is actually at stake, comes through the movement between the locations that releases the controlling gaze of the subject to a passionate intensity that haunts the various sites of desire between women.

In "The War Machine of Noncategorical, Lesbian Intersubjectivity," I examine

the way Marlatt pushes the undecidability of war into the ethics of a nonexclusionary praxis that deconstructs the identity of separate categories of gender and sexuality in an anti-Oedipal (not pre-Oedipal) desiring connection between women's bodies, languages, and cultural locations. The desiring connections between the multiple and partial corporeal, theoretical, literary, geographical, linguistic, national, and temporal bodies of women are not identification but connections between differences that cannot fully recuperate the focus as a singular foundational metaphor. As with Brossard's text, certain strategic figurations are necessary to combat the violence that makes women and lesbians unspeakable within both Lacanian psychoanalysis and poststructuralism. Due to the phallic divide that separates language from body, the conscious from the unconscious, self from other, and figure from ground, women and bodies are the unspeakable other for Lacan, and desire is an unreal fantasy based on *méconnaissance*. A masculinist poststructuralism⁸ that not only continues to inscribe bodies as meaningless essentialist origins but also dissolves categories before taking political account of potential blind spots simply enacts a new discourse that keeps women and lesbians unspeakable. Marlatt's novel demonstrates that the risk of violence — in both the strategically essentialist oppositional move and the poststructuralist erasure of bodily essence — must

⁸Of course, a masculinist poststructuralism is not simply a poststructuralism practised by men. The figure of woman in the philosophy of Derrida and Deleuze and Guattari resurrects the same metaphysics as practised by the Renaissance sonnet: the figure of woman becomes an empty, meaningless platform (a Platonic matrix, womb) that enables the author's transcendental access to truth (which for the poststructuralist is the truth of nontruth). But this evacuation of embodied difference is not limited to male philosophers. As I argue earlier, Annamarie Jagose's insistence that Brossard's deployment of the body inscribes an essentialist and metaphysical outside to language inscribes the same masculinist erasure.

be taken to enable a lesbian “desiring writing” that resists the warring binary narrative of sameness.

In “The ‘Noise’ of the ‘World Cracking’ in Love: A Delirious Revolution,” I examine Brand’s insistence on the need for oppositional anger to enable the deconstruction of the violence of constitutive categories of thought, language, subjects, and communities. Only after sedimented alignments of representation and identity formation are deregulated can the revolutionary power of loving connection between differences create the “grace” of a continual lesbian production of uncommodifiable newness without the colonizing erasure of territorial specificity and difference.

In accordance with the nonfoundational meeting between contra-dictions in which each author inscribes a lesbian “desiring writing” as a between-women production, I examine Brossard’s *Le désert mauve*, Marlatt’s *Taken*, and Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here* as evidence of the development of a rhizomatic, lesbian postmodern poetics of poststructuralist intersubjectivity. Transgression and translation between the theories of Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, Spivak, Bhabha, Irigaray, and Butler without fidelity to the totality of their positions enables me to theorize the ficto-poetics all three authors inscribe of a mobile, nonessential, lesbian intersubjectivity that rhizomatically emerges in the split postcolonial spaces of a Canadian and Québécoise affirmative deconstruction. The similarities between each work enable me to organize my argument around issues of sexual, corporeal, racial, national, literary, theoretical, cultural, and political embodiments of language that cross the disciplinary differences of the theorists I draw on and continually produce uncommodifiable, uncontainable sense. Different intersubjectivities continually appear in the mobile translations between locations that change the substance

of (what is taken for) reality. However, the differences between the ways the novels address these issues demand that I treat them independently in order to retain the specificity of theoretical focus demanded by a nonfoundational coalition politics.

Following this rhizomatic premise without the foundation of an organizing subject or object of desire, I conclude that what is new and different in these novels is the passionate and political, linguistic haunting of heterogeneous sites of desiring production between women that create desiring lesbian intersubjects. The virtuality of intersubjects has a ghost-like apparitional quality but is not a fantasy. Intersubjects appear in an abandoned textual erotics sparked by an erasure of solid substance that connects across difference; they haunt, without completely abandoning, the impossible categorical locations of female and lesbian desiring production. This commonality provides signs of an interwoven but not identical or reducible Canadian and Québécoise affirmative lesbian postmodernism that creates a new sense of subjectivity that moves with the speed of light in the quantum collision of particular bodies and minds.

Acknowledgement

This dissertation would never have come to fruition without the unflagging support, guidance, and critical commentary of my supervisor, Janice Williamson. As a whole, the rhizomatic body without organs of my supervisory committee provided me with excellent feedback on radically diverse issues. Jo-Ann Wallace's insistence on a clear methodology enabled me to come to grips with the rhizomatic, deconstructive interlanguage of my theory. Doug Barbour's eye for detail was irreplaceable. More important, however, was his question about the stability of molecular elements, which led me to rework my earlier ideas about the quantum movement of language and thought and, ultimately, challenge the teleological resonance of Deleuze and Guattari's sense of "immanence" as the stage beyond molecularity. Claudine Potvin removed the stumbling blocks in my French and Spanish, but my greatest debt to her is the way she inspired me to rethink psychoanalysis in general and Kristeva in particular. Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge the enormous contributions of Wiesia Kolasinska and Liam Quigley in their patience with and support of my obsessive work habits.

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Part I. Toward a Desiring Intersubjectivity

Chapter 1. Introduction: The Politics of an Intersubjective Lesbian Fiction-Theory

A curious phenomenon seems to be developing among the major lesbian writers in this northern part of the North American continent. Literary writing in Canada has long been known for the close connection between university departments of English and creative writing.¹ Rather than combining an academic university career with creative writing, Nicole Brossard, Daphne Marlatt, and Dionne Brand have all either chosen to keep a distance between themselves and the academy or have been excluded by the academy. On one hand, the growing number of writers who are able to produce literature without academic tenure may simply bear witness to the growth of Canadian writing as an always precarious, almost viable industry. But the distance from the academy of Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand also reflects the tenuous position of transgressive postmodern lesbian ficto-theory in relation to academic traditions and disciplines. In “Toward a Desiring Intersubjectivity,” I develop the rhizomatic theoretical locations of poststructuralism that I transgress to read their ficto-theories.

¹Witness, among others, A.J.M Smith (Michigan State University), Jay Macpherson, Robertson Davies, and Margaret Avison (all affiliated with the University of Toronto), Eli Mandel (University of Alberta and York University), Earle Birney (University of British Columbia), James Reaney and Frank Davey (both affiliated with University of Western Ontario), George Bowering (Simon Fraser University), Robert Kroetsch (State University of New York at Binghamton and University of Manitoba), Aritha van Herk (University of Calgary), Doug Barbour and Kristjana Gunnars (both from University of Alberta), and Michael Ondaatje and Janice Kulyck Keefer (both from University of Guelph). Of course, there have always been exceptions (such as D.C. Scott, George Woodcock, Dennis Lee, bill bissett, Margaret Atwood, bpNicol, Steve McCaffery), who, for one economic reason or another could pursue their literary careers apart from the departments of English, although all of these writers have been available for positions as writers-in-residence.

Each of the writers is highly educated. Nicole Brossard has a Baccalauréat specializing in pedagogy from the Université du Québec à Montréal, an M.A. en lettres from Université du Montréal, and has participated in philosophy study groups, organized colloquia on Québec and women's writing, and founded the publishing house L'intégrale (Godard, "Nicole Brossard" 126). Daphne Marlatt has an MA in Comparative Literature from Indiana University, an honorary PhD from University of Western Ontario, and, like Brossard, has also organized conferences on women's writing in Canada and Québec. She was also a founding member of *Tessera*. Dionne Brand completed a BA in English and Philosophy and began a PhD in Education, both at the University of Toronto (Birbalsingh 120).

Yet none of these writers has academic tenure. Brossard taught for only a couple of years in the late 1960s (Yoken 111) and in 1982-84 was Visiting Professor in the department of French at Queen's University (Godard, "Nicole Brossard" 126). Instead, she devotes her intellectual energy to fiction théorique, a writing methodology in which she can act "comme créatrice et comme animatrice" (Yoken 111) and contribute to the development of lesbian and feminist culture. Brand quit both her PhD and her teaching position at the University of Guelph because, she says, "It required another kind of construction of sentences, and another kind of mastery that didn't leave room for virtuosity" ("Being Dionne" 69). Marlatt has held positions as writer-in-residence in various universities and accepted the temporary position as Ruth Wynn Woodward Chair of Women's Studies at Simon Fraser University that enabled her to organize the conference *Telling It: Women and Language Across Cultures* (*Telling It* 12). Yet she has

never held tenure, was refused a position in Creative Writing at the University of Victoria, and writes, “In academia, except perhaps in Women’s Studies departments and programs, lesbian faculty continue to render themselves invisible, and teaching or writing critically on overtly lesbian texts tends still to be considered death to an academic career” (*Telling It* 17). Brossard’s criticism of the double bind in which “daily reality” (“the military apparatus, the rise in the price of gold, the evening news, pornography”) “has been for most women a fiction” and in which “women’s reality” (“maternity, rape, prostitution, chronic fatigue, verbal, physical, and mental violence”) “has been perceived as a fiction” further pushes the envelope that folds between reality and fiction (*Aerial Letter* 75). Further, Brossard argues, the exclusion of the feminine from the symbolic means that “. . . the feminine subject seems to be real only in the fiction-writing which brings her about” by “outmanoeuvre[ing] ‘straight’ (linear-binary) language and thought” (*Aerial Letter* 145). Academia demands truthful genealogy, textual fidelity, and controlling argument, not the fictional appropriation and flight through which these writers create mobile lesbian ficto-theories.

While writing on overtly lesbian texts no longer means the death of an academic career, the theory behind such writing can still jeopardize academic credibility. If exclusionary practice in the academy is true — and it persists in the essentialism/construction divide that keeps lesbian poststructuralist theory quiet if not silenced as the impossibility of sense in the categorical term *lesbian* that is therefore *not*

poststructuralist² — I put my academic career on the line by examining the transgressive, poststructuralist, lesbian, fictional politics and philosophy of fiction in Brossard's *Le désert mauve*, Marlatt's *Taken*, and Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*. By reading the lesbian ficto-theory of these authors with and against poststructuralist theories, I will deconstruct the academically sanctioned deconstructionists in order to theorize the lesbian deconstruction that inscribes these fictional works. Such deconstruction does not mean, as Gayatri Spivak argues, pointing out the error of another's theory or writing:

"Deconstruction, whatever it may be, is not most valuably an exposure of error, certainly not other people's error, other people's essentialism." Instead, it means using and questioning the terms of their arguments: "The most serious critique in deconstruction is the critique of things that are extremely useful, things without which we cannot live on, take chances" (Spivak, *Outside* 4). The lesbian-feminist politics of fiction in the works of

²See Robyn Wiegman's "Introduction: Mapping the Lesbian Postmodern," which concludes, "Quite rightly, or so it seems to me, the lesbian postmodern slips and shifts Monique Wittig's decidedly modernist proclamation: not just that the lesbian is 'not a woman' but the lesbian is not — cannot continue to be — 'the lesbian' either." Wiegman's claim is not simply a problematization of the multiple contradictions in an enclosing, singular category but a leap from the impossibility of "the epistemology of identities" to the impossibility of deploying a modernist category of political struggle for "rights . . . and reason that would guarantee the less than liberatory achievement of (an always bourgeois) cultural legitimacy" (16). Such negative rather than affirmative deconstruction enacts a utopian disembodiment from the social and political need for strategic strikes against the conditions and values that establish bourgeois legitimacy. As Brand argues through a post-Marxist use of negativity, imperialist values inscribe conditions of oppression that must be negated. Such negation of the inscription of illegitimacy does not imply positivist legitimacy. Further, as Nealon argues, political change through deconstruction depends on a catachrestic nominalism that continues to use categorical terms but pushes them to the limits of sense. To simply dismiss categorical terminology enacts a political quietude that sublates resistance to the violence of social regulation that uses those categories.

Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand reveals both the similarities to and difference from any existing deconstructive theory. As Marlatt writes, “. . . imagining can scarcely be invoked in the same breath as intellectual rigour. She, the theorizing poet, recognizes that imagining undermines doxa, the authorized line of descent which legitimates theory” (*Readings from the Labyrinth* 191). Such transgression through a ficto-theory that mines various theoretical arguments for their potential to create what Marlatt sees as an “emerging interrelatedness in lesbian writing” (*Readings from the Labyrinth* 147) enacts a fictional opening of possibilities rather than a theoretical explanation or examination of what exists. My reading of the enigmatic relation between a rhizomatic and endless list of such elements as language, theories, literature, politics, gender, race, bodies, landscapes, animals, writers, and readers reveals how the theoretical and fictional elements change meaning when they meet in different intensities and combinations and create a mobile intersubjectivity that changes the real, which is the interrelation between everything, including language.

The difference between the negative evacuation of foundational truths and the affirmative creation of new positions without the agency of a subject is reflected in the difference between the desiring intersubjectivity in these lesbian fictions and the current trend of American-influenced poststructuralist theory in the North American academy. After the Barthesian “Death of the Author” in poststructuralist theory, the subject is simply the residual effect of a grammatical agent of action, an echo of an evacuated

phallogocentric metaphysics³ and the Western writing economy. The subject no longer has the mandate to verb, organize, and commodify the object or itself. In poststructuralist theory, the subject and his or her body and desire are the effect of the discourses that create them rather than agents who direct the production of knowledge from an essential unknown source outside discourse. Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* and Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* argue that the meaning and even physical contours of the body, desire, and sexuality are produced within the disciplinary regimes of a geographical and historical age. Although from Australia, Annamarie Jagose has been influenced by a conservatism⁴ in American-influenced deconstruction that illogically moves from Judith Butler's and Toril Moi's accusations of pre-Oedipal, corporeal essentialism in the work of Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Hélène Cixous (Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics*) to a complete eradication of corporeal sense. Jagose narrows poststructuralist theory in *Lesbian Utopics* to the point that discursive construction means that any reference to bodies not subsumed by patriarchal discourse is an essentialist

³In *Of Grammatology* Jacques Derrida argues that in phallogocentrism God is the father of speech or the full presence behind the misrepresentation of language. Since direct access to the full presence of God would cause blindness, language mediates the full truth of the ultimate referent (God's presence, truth, and knowledge) but is always premised on his absence. In the same way that speech stands in for God's absence, writing stands in for the absence of the speaker in Derrida's distinction between written language and speech (although this distinction also comes apart in his argument that a speaker often holds back while a writer is required to embellish the subject more fully in a written text).

⁴The conservative trend in parts of American deconstruction can also be seen in the Yale school's idea that a successful deconstruction results in the failure to choose and Cornell's Jonathan Culler, who argues that deconstruction "does not develop a new philosophical framework" (155).

outside. Jagose's supports her argument through Foucault. But Foucault argues that a repressive system cannot contain itself: the proliferation of sexualities generated by medical and juridical investment leads to "a deployment quite different from the law. . . . [N]ever have there existed more centers of power . . . never more sites where the intensity of pleasures and the persistency of power catch hold, only to spread elsewhere" (49). And even Butler, also influenced by Foucault, argues that "prohibitions do not always 'work,' that is, do not always produce the docile body that fully conforms to the social ideal[;] they may delineate body surfaces that do not signify conventional heterosexual polarities" (*Bodies That Matter* 64). In the affirmative deconstruction of a desiring intersubjectivity, partial presences of bodies and molecular linguistic components are beyond the controlling scope of social regulation.

Levelling all the elements by which we make sense to a horizontal plane on which language, for example, is not valued above or below corporeal sense extrapolates a feminist, nonfoundational coalition politics into the fictional and theoretical foundations of these works. By positing corporeality as a mobile sign that has no inherent meaning outside the reciprocity of contextual relation (between different bodies, bodies and languages, bodies and temporality, bodies and socio-political relations), a nonfoundational inclusion of corporeality spans the binary separation of essentialist and constructionist arguments. Corporeality becomes part of an affirmative inclusion of multiple differences that push thought toward new sense. In nonfoundational coalition, what has been called *feminism* has become *feminisms*, responding to the need for many different agendas functioning together without the academic Western imperialism that has

in the past identified the priorities and values of feminist struggle. For example, rather than settle into a less tortuous, negativist evacuation of foundations caused by the dissolution of gender as a category of coherent sense, Chandra Talpade Mohanty's widely acknowledged critique of Western imperialism in feminism leads her to call for "the possibility of coalitions among (usually white) Western feminists and working-class feminists and feminists of color around the world" without an imperialist "priorit[izing] of issues" (53). A coalition does not have the identity of a subject. It is an intersubject. As Brand says, ". . . a coalition is not a home, it's a room where you come to negotiate all kinds of things" ("Owning the Language" 21). Such coalitions must, by nature, be nonfoundational, rather than antifoundational. *Antifoundational* presumes a stance against all foundations, including the multiple, partial foundations of signs with no inherent sense in themselves. *Nonfoundational*, on the other hand, suggests that the coalition itself has no singular foundation. In order to leave the coalitional foundation open, the multiple, specific, and contradictory differences that each member brings to the coalition cannot be neutralized. Without leaving room for specific and contingent territorial locations, the abstraction of a coalition would erase difference.

The shifting focus between the multiple lesbian characters whose relations and language inscribe lesbian desire in the novels by Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand enacts the nonexclusionary practice of a nonfoundational coalition politics that Butler argues "assumes neither that 'identity' is a premise nor that the shape or meaning of a coalitional assemblage can be known prior to its achievement" (*Gender Trouble* 15). Butler uses the term *antifoundational*, but her description of it fits what I prefer to call the

nonfoundational work of catachrestic nominalism premised on contingent and changeable foundations. Brand argues that the struggle in coalition work comes from negotiation between micropolitical positions that do not lose specificity (“Owning the Language” 21). Brossard suggests in *Le désert mauve* that a nonfoundational coalition of lesbian and feminist energy draws radically different women together in a utopic or abstract space that can never exist in a single, territorially located character or position. She figures a nonfoundational coalition as *l’essentielle*: a holograph intensively charged with the energy of incommensurable positions. Marlatt’s nonfoundational lesbian politics crosses lines of sexual orientation and gender that draw differences of nation and background into the differences within the category of lesbian. Members of a coalition must be drawn together to work for change, and these novels by Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand are haunted by an energy of between-women desiring production that persists within the disparity of what that means. A nonfoundational politics in fiction can have neither a subject who sets the terms of unity nor an object that defines the goal prior to its appearance as the result of an interaction among differences. The lesbian intersubject, like a nonfoundational coalition politics, has no subject or object. Instead, the lesbian intersubject emerges in the meeting between differences that are molecularly exploded so that their categorical positionality (be they words, characters, or location) cannot completely drive them apart.

The inability to align lesbian writing with the lesbian bodies that erotically connect in the traces of a textual between-women production raises issues of prohibitive heterosexism and sexism in the guise of a global ‘neutrality’ where there is no outside

effect of that which escapes the law of systemic regulation or sense outside language.⁵ The nonexclusionary proliferation of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call “n sexes” and Jacques Derrida sees as a micrological proliferation of sexualities for each event can erase the local specificities of each interaction if taken with the purity of a theoretical law. The desiring reader who engages with the desiring production of the reading/writing event virtually produces the “n sexes” that appear in the collision between sexualities, genders, and sexes from multiple and already split locations (including differences between lesbians). This does not always produce a lesbian intersubject because the reader can resist the particular inscription in a dominant reversal of Judith Fetterley’s argument in *The Resisting Reader* that a lesbian reading a text written by a heterosexual man can still create a becoming-lesbian in the reading event. The lesbian intersubject is not a substantial, self-contained body, which means it can be resisted and may not appear in the reading/writing event. However, in the texts I examine, the resistant lesbian reader/writer opens the conversation of between-women desiring production and names the local lesbian materials. This specificity is not categorical enclosure and exclusion but a territorial location that is necessary in order for the proliferation of “n sexes” to flourish within a nonfoundational politics rather than a ‘universal’ reduction of differences into the self-same. The desiring production that appears in an already heterogeneous between-women space is always cut through with

⁵In contrast to the term *meaning*, I use the term *sense* throughout this dissertation to describe a combination of sensory perception and an abstract perception that resists the organized commodification of clearly defined knowledge.

differences. Virtual lesbian bodies and intersubjects are created in the reading/writing event that engages with the textual erotics of alchemical change that occurs on the partial surfaces where desiring female inscriptions meet with affirmative intensity. The electrical charge begins a spinning motion that circles the central issue of female bodies like electrons in the atom that orbit a nucleus in “an optimal balance between the attraction of the nucleus and their reluctance to be confined” (Capra 73). An affirmative attraction to the surfaces of corporeal sense generates the specificity of rhizomatic, socio-corporeal issues of race, class, nation, language, geography, history, and literature. Yet, as with particles of high energy reactions, that attraction is balanced by a resistance to be confined as a categorical, unspeaking body of phallo(go)centric and gendered regulation. In the alternating current (see Lorna’s adjustment of Kathy’s alternator in Brossard’s *Le désert mauve*) of attraction and repulsion, the electrons (as signs of the partial surfaces of inscription) speed up, get excited, and spin out of their original, sedentary orbits into a virtual lesbian intersubjectivity that defines and is defined by each reader differently.

Part of developing a poststructuralist theory of intersubjectivity involves dismantling the essentialism/construction divide and finding the particular lesbian bodies of “desiring writing” that breathe vital lesbian presences into each of the three novels I examine. The divisive issue of essentialism/construction only perpetuates the systemic closure of binary truth as right and wrong, which can never be the deconstructive undecidable that spins from the middle to another nonbinary location. The argument of poststructuralist proponents such as Annamarie Jagose, who cite the pure theoretical truth of the absence of the subject outside of discursive construction, ultimately support a

phallogocentric logic in which language, thought, and the symbolic are founded on the subject's separation from heterogeneous and maternal bodies. But, unlike Kristeva's theory, the bodily *chora* that continually challenges the objectification of language disappears as an impossible, pre-Oedipal, originary subject. Such poststructuralism leaves the speaking subject trapped in what Fredric Jameson calls, in his book of the same title, "the prison house of language." Nothing remains outside systemic regulation, seemingly not even language itself, which Kristeva argues derails from enclosure as it is attacked by the heterogeneous body's death drive that, in Jagose's poststructuralism, no longer exists. My poststructuralist argument for intersubjectivity also undermines the essentialism of Kristeva's originary subject as well as the psychoanalytic restriction of subjective difference to the sexual definition that occurs as the subject emerges through the gendered matrix of language. Such theory dismisses the heterogeneity of language itself, sublimates difference to unknowable otherness, and cannot account for subjective marking through categories of race, nation, different languages, class, sexual orientation, history, physical ability, as well as such things as weather and landscape that are not even considered relevant to the deep essence of the subject. Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand, the three major lesbian practitioners of postmodernist literature in Canada and Québec, speak no arboreal purity of theoretically established truth. Their work, like mine, transgresses various theories of deconstruction, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, and feminism to modify the theoretical purity of any singular methodology and enable a desiring production of intersubjective writing.

An affirmative lesbian intersubjectivity that emerges in the space between a

subject and its poststructuralist evacuation sweeps through these novels in the “desiring writing” that eludes representational reduction. While the poststructuralist influence on queer and gender theories has made the queer subject into the commodity that cannot be, putting quotation marks around the words *women* and *lesbians*, I will generally continue to use and problematize categorical words without quotation marks. Surely, a literary critic never forgets that the meaning of a word cannot be contained. The catachrestic nominalism in these novels, or the naming through nouns without the solidity of a foundational concept, means that every word would have to be put in quotation marks or crossed through with erasure as differences within the word proliferate.⁶ The subject never controls the action. The “pleasure of the text,” Roland Barthes says, desires beyond the singular creator or referent.

In her *Liminal Visions of Nicole Brossard*, Alice Parker defines “desiring writing” as a term that Brossard uses to refer to an erotic slippage into difference within the holes

⁶See Gayatri Spivak’s term “strategic essentialism” and her discussion of the Derridean “trace” as that which puts Heidegger’s “Being” under erasure. Spivak elaborates and then quotes Derrida:

Now we begin to see how Derrida’s notion of ‘sous rature’ differs from that of Heidegger’s. Heidegger’s Being might point at an inarticulable presence. Derrida’s trace is the mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent present, of the lack at the origin that is the condition of thought and experience. . . . “The value of the transcendental arche [origin] must make its necessity felt before letting itself be erased. The concept of the arche-trace must comply with both that necessity and that erasure.” (Spivak, *Of Grammatology* xvii-xviii)

Spivak also puts “feminist” under erasure in a discussion of Derridean “hymeneal fable” (*Of Grammatology* xvi). I develop Spivak’s concepts of catachrestic nominalism and strategic essentialism more thoroughly in the subsection of “Rhizomatic Connections” entitled “Postcolonial Theory: Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak,” as well as throughout the dissertation.

and solvent materials of language (10). While Parker notes the phrase is defined by Philippe Haeck in *La table d'écriture*, the difference between Haeck's definition of "une écriture désirante" and Parker's deployment of "desiring writing" is worth investigating. In "Une écriture désirante," written about Nicole Brossard and Carole Massé, Haeck writes,

C'est le désir qui est l'enjeu de cette écriture: voyez-le dans la «feinte», dans «sa langue parle avec un trou», dans «l'intuition de la lésion»; on reconnaît à ces expressions le complexe de castration que quelques-uns prétendent féminin à tort: ce qui manque . . . c'est le désir qui appartienne au corps propre. (*La table d'écriture* 166)

Parker's use of the term "desiring writing" and Brossard's lesbian and postmodern "vfentres" open an erotic gap that refuses the castration complex of feminine abjection in the méconnaissance and insufficiency of language. The focus on the partial presences of inscription that Brossard calls the "surfaces of sense" moves away from the idea of desire created in the separation between the original need and its spoken and lacking (mis)representation. The desiring holes in the language of these three writers are the partiality and porosity of all textual and corporeal bodies that enable quantum connection. A "desiring writing" creates new becomings from intensive interactions between partial surfaces, leaps in contingent connection with other sources, other referents, other contexts, other sounds that transgress categorical signification and the conceptual equation of a word with a represented thing. Because of this meaning, which Parker describes throughout her book, I use the term "desiring writing" rather than "pleasure of

the text” to describe the lesbian erotics of an intersubjective, nonrepresentational writing in these texts. Without representational depth, the heterogeneous surfaces of language collide and produce new sense. These novels are all written by established poets who practice the poetic derailment of the word in chains of sound, multiple meaning, metaphoric leaps, and intertextual allusion rather than a linear narrative moving from source to target, or from speaking subject to representational word. Such desire, in the movement of linguistic particles that speed up, fly out of their original orbits, and create new elements by binding together with other particles enacts a nonfoundational coalitionist praxis for an intersubjective movement in fiction that has no organizing subject (ego, proper subject) and no pre-existent object (target) of desire. Such production of the new is what Deleuze and Guattari define as the act of desire itself: not desire for the other that will complete the self and reproduce the desire for originary wholeness but desire as the energy within molecules that spins beyond the control of the subject, explodes the subject into “a body without organs” (Deleuze and Guattari)⁷ and creates unforeseen results.

The similarities between the fictional theory (politics) of the postmodern novels in this study establish a cultural location that enables me to develop a theory of desiring lesbian intersubjectivity in the writing of Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand. Yet, in

⁷Simply put, Deleuze and Guattari argue that a “body without organs” does not lose material specificity but continually strives to undo the codes of social organization. I expand on this concept throughout my dissertation and bring their concept of “rhizomatics” into relation with the writers I discuss in the next few paragraphs and throughout the dissertation.

accordance with a nonfoundational coalition politics, such cultural location is neither a unified community nor completely disjunctive. Instead, the cultural context becomes one of lesbian rhizomatic and postcolonial movement, contextual qualification, similarity, and difference between hybrid Canadian and Québécoises lesbian writers who are connected with but move beyond the boundaries of national location and between the division between popular culture and academic theory. The fictional philosophy and politics of these writers who speak together, yet differently, enable me to deploy a variety of relevant poststructuralist theories and reveal where, for a lesbian feminist “desiring writing” in Canada and Québec, the theories break down and mutate into an affirmative something else. This mobile someplace else maintains lesbian desiring movement in the erotic leaps and gaps, *les scènes blanches*, of the text where meaning spins out of control and cannot be categorically contained.

Because of the differences between these lesbian Canadian and Québécoises postmodern writers and their locations, any project to develop a unified theory meets its limits at the outset. The (post)colonial histories alone of regional, literary, political, linguistic, economic, religious, and racial differences in Canada and Québec make it impossible to describe a homogeneous lesbian writing tradition. But heterogeneous postmodern lesbian culture in Canada and Québec is more complex than the multiplicity of contradictory connections with state regulations. As Homi Bhabha argues, any culture or subject is already divided, so I not only face the differences between cultural locations but also the split within any living culture into the difference (not *méconnaissance*) of language that makes commensurability impossible even if I addressed only one of these

writers.⁸ The multiple splits within cultural location mean that the differences between the cultures of Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand also do not form insurmountable divisions but, instead, enable touchpoints for rhizomatic connections.

Instead of prescribing a unified lesbian postmodern poetics, I propose that the lesbian Canadian and Québécoises writers I examine in this dissertation form what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call a “rhizomatic” “body without organs” of an affirmative and deconstructive lesbian intersubjectivity. As a rhizomatic network that continually spreads outward, invades, and disrupts the manicured territories of heteropatriarchal representation and identities, the textual root filaments and lines of thought in these works cross, join, and raise a noisy chorus in the harmonics and discord of lesbian desiring production. Rhizomatics assumes no singular root stock or uninterrupted development. As Deleuze and Guattari write of their rhizomatic collaboration, “Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd” (*Thousand Plateaus* 3). A rhizomatic network makes connections that interrupt any continuous flow and continually form new places of becoming. My rhizomatic theory of postmodern lesbian writing takes off from Brossard’s figuration of *l’essenti-elle*: a lesbian, elemental drift that can never be represented because it is the movement between local, particular, and limited positions and their deterritorialized becomings rather than the positions themselves. Brossard writes a *virtu-elle* lesbian intensity into the attraction and repulsion between the sites of

⁸I further develop this idea of division within any culture that is premised on the difference between the speaking and the spoken subject in the subsection of “Rhizomatic Connections” entitled “The Postcolonial Theory of Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak.”

female figuration that become molecular elements in the embodied and abstract corps-texte (cortex) of thought. Each novelist inscribes the traces of various sites of female representation that dissolve into the emotional intensity of subatomic particles in drift.⁹

⁹Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the explosion of the subject into "a body without organs" uses the metaphor of molecular dispersement that moves toward what they call "becoming immanent." I find "immanence" too abstract. In my theory of a desiring intersubjectivity, I figure the sense of immanence that Deleuze and Guattari examine as the explosion of sense into what is unpredictable and unknowable in the metaphor of the quantum movement within molecular elements, which includes the atomic elements of molecules and the subatomic elements of atoms. At the subatomic level, this includes nuclei (which include protons, neutrons, and any other particle found in a nucleus), electrons, and virtual mesons. The neutron, a constituent of all atomic nuclei, is thought to consist of a positive charge at the centre and an equal negative charge surrounding it. An electron, like the neutron, is a fundamental particle of the atom, but the electron contains an electrical charge. A proton, another constituent of atomic nuclei, is thought to be closely related to the neutron in structure, since both have the same positive charge at the centre. However, the proton is surrounded with a positively charged shell, thus rendering it positive. The molecule is the smallest identifiable substance, while the subatomic particles are the smallest identifiable constitutive elements. However, the subatomic particles are not identifiable *substances* (*Websters*). Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand all write between molecular substances that identify located positions and insubstantial quantum movements of these substances into something else. Deleuze and Guattari's theory of molecularity and immanence also theorizes an insubstantial mobility of substance, although they seem to lose the metaphor of physics in their discussion of immanence. In quantum physics, as the electrons speed up they can fly away from the original neutron they orbit, bind with other electrons and neutrons, and form new molecules. Capra explains the virtual particles of quantum field theory:

[Virtual particles] . . . can only exist during the period of time allowed by the uncertainty principle. . . . In quantum field theory . . . all interactions are pictured as the exchange of virtual particles. . . . Every nucleon is surrounded by such a cloud of virtual mesons which live only for an exceedingly short period of time. However, virtual mesons may become real mesons under special circumstances. When a nucleon is hit by another particle moving with a high velocity, some of the energy of motion of that particle may be transferred to a virtual meson to free it from the cloud. This is how real mesons are created in high-energy collisions. (230-32)

My discussion of virtual particles and the insubstantiality of materials draws upon quantum field theory, while my discussion of concrete, territorial location draws upon molecularity.

Between the writers, lesbian “desiring writing” becomes the abstract production of this intensity in the proliferating and changing sites that cannot be represented except as a subatomic desiring drift between the contra-dictions of the molecular, local, particular, and contextual partial elements that inscribe and are inscribed on the bodies of women.

The three novels that I examine enact a ghostly haunting of radically different sites that puts the authorized lines of arboreal connection and meaning of the signified sites under erasure. However, a deconstructive tracing under erasure does not annihilate the ‘originary’ discursive site but resonates the difference of a lesbian, nonfoundational, rhizomatic politics. Brossard engages classical myth, Italian Renaissance and contemporary North American literature, French literary *modernité* and theoretical deconstruction, and French and North American feminist theory. Marlatt investigates colonial hybridity, West Coast poetics, and American and French feminist theory. Brand examines the place of the other in the hybridity of colonization, Marxist and postcolonial theory, and oral Caribbean narratives. While many of these sites are incommensurable, each author passionately haunts them by mining holes for deterritorialized flight in the heterogenous, philosophic, and linguistic porosity (or insubstantiality) of substantial location that enables a desiring metamorphosis of between-women intersubjectivity and creates a becoming-lesbian of the text. The rhizomatic crossing of the contextually different locations and intersubjects in the works of Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand enacts a deconstructive “war machine”¹⁰ that deregulates imperialist and phallogocentric codings

¹⁰The term *war machine* is from Deleuze and Guattari. Simply, they argue that a war machine struggles against all forms of organized containment to enlarge nomadic space.

of languages, bodies, and locations. The subatomic connections and explosions of molecular and categorical substantiality open into a lesbian interlanguage that never resolves in a unified target language that would close the desiring production of translation. However, the differences of the ‘source’ texts for such translation continue to mark the rhizomatic absence of foundational unity between their various lesbian interlanguages. Rather than proposing a unified lesbian theory of deconstruction or the territoriality of a lesbian target language for translation, I suggest that the passion for a deterritorializing connection with partial, territorial bodies and languages of different between-women productions forms the basis for a nonfoundational, rhizomatic, literary politics of diverse lesbian negotiations with feminist, postcolonial, and poststructural theories. Such negotiation also positions my theory as a mobile interlanguage of “desiring writing” that affirmatively creates the flux of an intersubjectivity that has neither the gaze nor intent of an originary subject in the translative movement between signs of sense (literatures, discourses, and theories).

A war machine is not the act of nations warring against others because that commodifies and contains the heterogeneous energy of a war machine. Because of the revolutionary stance of a lesbian “desiring writing” that strives to deregulate categorical definition that describes women in heterosexual reflection, keeps a feminine imaginary and corporeality unspeakable in language, and defines desire as lack inscribed by the phallus of consciousness that separates the ‘real’ from the symbolic, I find their term exceedingly useful. However, as with the *body without organs*, the nomadic sense of transgression that Deleuze and Guattari propose for the war machine disables that very heterogeneity to which they appeal. A lesbian ‘organization’ of sense must be maintained, even if not exclusively defined. As I argue in the subsection of “Issues” entitled “The Relation of Anti-Oedipus to Language and Desire,” heterogeneity can only be maintained if contingent specificity is retained.

Chapter 2. Rhizomatic Connections

Why Deconstruction?

Jacques Derrida insists that deconstruction is not a methodology because the strategies must remain specific to each context. Jeffrey T. Nealon agrees, arguing that the methodologies of rhetorical, pedagogical, postcolonial, philosophic, and feminist deconstructions differ (4). Yet those very differences of an interdisciplinary deconstruction provide me with the nonsystemic framework to make a new theory of an affirmative and rhizomatic deconstruction that can address the novels I analyze. In this chapter, I will trace the major points of connection between the theories of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Jacques Derrida, Luce Irigaray, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha — the major theorists that I draw on — that will enable me to negotiate their differences. In the next chapter, I address various points of crisis that arise in this negotiation and reveal the benefits and limits of each theory's ability to address a postmodern Canadian and Québécoise lesbian "desiring writing." These rhizomatic negotiations, in which one theory interrupts the previous only to be derailed by another, addresses the deconstructive desire in the ficto-theory of each novel to change the real by writing in the fold between the inside and the outside of Derridean textuality. By transgressing the categorical borders in which one theory is outside the disciplinary borders of another, but still part of textuality, a new intersubject arises that reveals the simultaneous literary, philosophic, political, racial, sexual, and ethical embodiment of a poststructuralist theory and language.

The deconstructive project is raised in each of these novels by the intersubjects

that and who explode the concept of an originary subject. Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand resist the idea of a pre-semiotic originary body that provides agency to change the real from a location outside language or social construction. However, they equally resist the binary solidity of that which is organized by language and social construction by writing without fidelity to methodological purity in established theories, languages, and literatures. In trans-gressive translation between systems of thought and inscription, with all the aggression that Susan Holbrook argues that hyphen implies, they push what is inside out and bring the outside in.¹ Their transgressive ficto-theory heightens the political implications in Derrida's destabilization of the categorical separation of fiction and philosophy in "The Law of Genre."

The connections between the postcolonial theory of Homi Bhabha, the deconstructive, Marxist, and feminist theory of Gayatri Spivak, the French feminist theory of Luce Irigaray, and the performative queer theory of Judith Butler are fairly easy to establish, since they all draw heavily on Derrida's fundamental premises if not directly from his work. Deleuze and Guattari, however, do not often refer to Derrida's theory and resist the Derridean insistence that there is nothing outside textual inscription ("il n'y a pas de hors-texte").² Nonetheless, each theorist rhizomatically addresses the

¹I must give homage (femmeage?) to Elizabeth Grosz's section headings in *Volatile Bodies* in which she discusses the gendered corporeality of thought and language in the theories of, among others, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty ("The Inside Out") and Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and Alphonso Lingis ("The Outside In").

²Derrida distinguishes between the restricted sense of writing (graphism) and the larger sense of writing that describes the double displacement of the "supplement" (the

deconstructive challenge to metaphysics, or, to use the terms of Deleuze and Guattari, the deregulation of organized subjects and state space. As Michel Foucault writes of the European poststructuralist milieu, “During the years 1945-1965 . . . there was a certain way of thinking correctly. . . . one had to be on familiar terms with Marx, not let one’s dreams stray too far from Freud. And one had to treat sign-systems — the signifier — with the greatest respect” (Preface, *Anti-Oedipus* xl). The philosophic negotiations between the works of Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche, or of leftist politics with psychoanalytic, philosophic, and semiotic theory, in Derrida’s deconstruction, Deleuze and Guattari’s schizoanalysis, Irigaray’s feminist ethics, Spivak’s postcolonial feminism, and Bhabha’s postcolonial culture theory enable me to make rhizomatic connections among the sources and sites of investigation with radical intent.

The Influence of Jacques Derrida

While Jacques Derrida is generally considered the “founding father” (a term he would deconstruct) of deconstruction, his work draws on a long Western tradition of negative philosophy that critiques a positive, substantial basis for truth. Positivist metaphysical science is premised on the fundamental principle of a transcendental presence that connects the human subject, consciousness, language, and truth to an

catachrestic metaphor) in which language creates the idea of an original concept that is displaced by the acknowledged metaphorical nature of language. The limited sense of writing is the distinction between written and spoken language. However, both written and spoken languages ultimately displace originary presence in Derrida’s theory of textual knowledge.

originary alignment with God. Derrida and the philosophers of negativity argue that absence, not presence, is the originary call to thought. Derrida's deconstructive readings of Western philosophy through the writing of Plato, Hegel, Heidegger, and Nietzsche open a space of difference for an intersubjectivity that has no subject/object, self/other, or originary essence for the *méconnaissance* of representation. Derrida develops his theory of the absence of the subject in language through the absent *pharmakon* in Plato's discussion of writing. The *pharmakon* is both the cure for forgetting the absent presence of God as the originary father of speech — the originary speaking subject (phallogos) of truth and intended meaning before its displacement in the materiality of language — and the poison that annihilates the father's originary presence. Derrida reveals that, in the folding between the inside and outside of the proper subject of cultural knowledge, the floating term of the *pharmakon* haunts Plato's lengthy discussion of the *pharmakeus* (the imprisoned scapegoat) with its absence. What is taken to be the outside is produced from within. Yet this does not lead to a return of the self-same. Derrida's call to the other as that which escapes appropriation critically responds to Hegel's theory of the appropriation of the subject (taking on and deciding what is proper and intrinsic to each subject) through a violent opposition of self and other. His concept of erasure is influenced by Heidegger's destabilization of "Being" as a term that can positively be defined (although Derrida resists Heidegger's metaphysical location of the contradictions of "Being" as that which precedes and, thus, escapes description). Nietzsche's negative philosophy challenges the values naturalized by metaphysics by insisting that the social inscription of the subject, truth, and knowledge produces the catachrestic substitution of the effect of discourse (the

meaning of being, thought, truth) for a pre-linguistic origin of discourse. Nietzsche's warrior/philosopher³ who confronts the violent march of metaphors is essential to Derrida's idea of the double displacement of the chain of "supplements" or the "arche-écriture," in which the linguistic construction of knowledge is taken as the original, pre-linguistic idea itself. In the double displacement, that linguistic metaphor that has been taken as the original idea is again displaced by the acknowledged metaphoricity of approximation in representational language. Nietzsche's theory of social inscription also informs Derrida's destabilization of the division between the inside (psychological depth, essence) and the outside (social forces).

Derrida depicts the inscription of the inside (meaning) by the outside (writing) in the metaphor of the "hymen"⁴ that folds binary oppositions together to reveal nothing but the effect of an outside that has been created from within the system.⁵ The words *inside* and *outside* fold together. An extenuation of the outside surface of the skin/text creates the effect of a hidden inside, depth, or unknowable essence. His deconstruction of the

³Nietzsche's aphorism that "wisdom loves a warrior" depends on the idea that the philosopher's violent and potent penetration of social codes and values can change thought. Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the war machine and the violence of creative thought derives from Nietzsche's philosophical and poetic warrior.

⁴Derrida's metaphor of the "hymen" has been criticized by feminist deconstructionists. I develop this in the section of "Issues" entitled "The Relation of Anti-Oedipus to Language and Desire."

⁵A clear example of this is Derrida's examination of the criminal, scapegoat, or *pharmakeus* in *Dissemination*. Derrida argues that the outlaw is imprisoned for violating social codes and functioning outside of the law. Yet the prisoner is fed, housed, and supported by the society and laws that he/she is said to be outside. What is outside the law defines what is inside and acceptable.

hymeneal fold between inside and outside and the elliptical return of *différance* within the gap, holes, and absence of full presence in language opens into a call to that which is other of the already known and already inscribed. Both create residual effects of something outside language and discourse, something other and unknown, although those effects are generated from within the *différance* of writing. The movement of *différance* both differs from itself and defers any final resolution of meaning in a hidden originary essence that is outside language or a commodified description within the already known of language. This movement toward the other that is not originary truth but that creates the effect of such unknowable essence becomes the “arche [original] écriture,” the larger sense of writing that Derrida says is always already present in any system of representation and thought.

Derrida transgresses disciplinary borders between fiction, linguistics, psychoanalysis, and philosophy to reveal the authorization and regulation of knowledge by sanctioned disciplinary methodologies and canonical genealogies of fictional and linguistic propositions as truths and histories. Posing as a transgressive “bricoleur,” Derrida translates within “the text of a heritage which is more or less coherent or ruined . . . [rather than theorizing as an] engineer . . . [who is] the one to construct the totality of his language, syntax, and lexicon” (*Writing and Difference* 285). Unlike Claude Lévi-Strauss’s interdisciplinary structuralist analysis of systems, Derrida’s theory of the elliptical return of *différance* refuses closure and the repetition of identical patterns because deferral and difference always derail the identical reproduction of any system or any original.

The idea of textual theory is innately transgressive. Jonathan Culler explains that interdisciplinary “textual theory” “includes Saussure, Marx, Freud, Erving Goffman, and Jacques Lacan, as well as Hegel, Nietzsche, and Hans-Georg Gadamer. . . . ‘whatever is articulated by language’” (*On Deconstruction* 8). Derrida’s work (especially *Of Grammatology* and “Différance”) draws extensively on Ferdinand de Saussure’s theory that the phonological and written signifiers of language are arbitrary and have no essential connection to ideas. This difference and separation of language and ideas enables him to explore the linguistic and disciplinary construction of knowledge and the gaps of the unknown as systemic propositions that can be transgressed in the call to the other. The Saussurian separation between language and thought ties in closely with Jacques Lacan’s theory of the lack and separation from origin inscribed by the development of the subject upon entry into the symbolic of language. Yet the relationship of Derrida’s theories of the “supplement” and the “trace” with Lacan, whom he rarely mentions, is fraught with difficulty. Kelly Oliver argues that Derrida’s omission of Lacan is an antagonistic issue of “propriety, property, ownership. Who stole from whom?” (*Womanizing Nietzsche* 78).⁶ Freud’s work on the unconscious, especially in the function

⁶The conflict in Derrida’s work between the psychoanalytic view of language as lack and separation from full presence and the schizoanalytic view (Deleuze and Guattari) of language as partial is a problem I address in the subsection of “Issues” entitled “The Relationship of Anti-Oedipus to Language and Desire.” In that section, I discuss the difference between Lynette Hunter’s view of Derrida’s use of language as partial and impossible to organize systematically and the critiques that Elizabeth Grosz and Kelly Oliver propose of the persistence of regulation. Grosz challenges the regulatory over-coding in Derrida’s language, and Oliver reads the persistence of foundational lack in Derrida’s metaphors.

of metaphor and metonymy in the psychological movement of condensation and displacement, informs much of Derrida's thought about the linguistic call to otherness.⁷ Spivak argues that "Freud allowed Derrida to think that the philosophical move did not necessarily require a Nietzschean violence. Simply to recognize that one is shaped by *différance*, to recognize that the 'self' is constituted by its never-fully-to-be-recognized-ness, is enough. We do not have to cultivate forgetfulness or the love of chance; we *are* the play of chance and necessity" (*Of Grammatology* xliv). Derrida combines the psychoanalytic split subject with a philosophical and linguistic displacement of any unknowable originary essence or foundational truth. This displacement of phallogocentric truth becomes an enabling point of departure for feminist and postcolonial critiques of the authority of Western humanism to colonize language, bodies, desire, and thought. But feminist and postcolonial theories reveal that the consequent displacement of corporeality as an originary outside enacts an imperialistic recolonization of alterity.

The Feminist and Queer Theory of Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler

In *Speculum of the Other Woman*, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, and *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Luce Irigaray also investigates the work of Lacan, Freud, Hegel, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Plato, and others. This background ties her feminist deconstructive

⁷Freud's influence on Derrida's writing about the difference and deferral within *différance* pervades "Différance" and "Freud and the Scene of Writing." The idea of concealment and revelation within language and thought, the unconscious traces that have residual effect, and the call to "absolute alterity, that is, the Other" ("Différance," *Speech* 152) are directly connected to the split subject of Freudian theory.

theory to the question of the ‘other’ and the general discursive area of investigation from which Derrida emerged. Yet a feminist resistance to Derrida’s masculinist figuration of the other also distances Irigaray from a purely Derridean deconstruction. In *Womanizing Nietzsche*, Kelly Oliver argues that Irigaray rhetorically deploys the unspeaking voice of the feminine other in *The Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* and, thus, implicitly addresses and criticizes Derrida’s *Spurs*. Irigaray’s feminist critique of the issue of the ‘other’ is philosophically complicated and raises issues for a feminist ethics.

Consequently, I postpone this discussion to the subsection of “Issues” entitled “The Challenge of Feminist Ethics to the ‘Other’ of Language and Intersubjective Relations.” There, I discuss Irigaray’s argument that the expansion of knowledge through a Derridean or Lacanian “call to the other” can only reproduce the masculinist sedimentation of knowledge because it functions within the Hegelian dialectics of appropriation.⁸ Irigaray’s

⁸Hegelian self-definition, a definition of what is *propre*, what belongs to the self, depends on opposition to the improper other that defines the other through the values of the self-same. Derrida takes up the issue of the *propre* as a naming through untruth and distortion in *Spurs*. In “The Character of ‘Character,’” Hélène Cixous’s definition of “character” relies on the representational commodification of the *propre* subject who assures the communication of normative values through a marketable novel. She writes,

The ideology underlying this fetishization of “character” is that of an “I” who is a *whole* subject (that of the “character” as well as that of the author), conscious, knowable; and the enunciatory “I” *expresses himself* in the text, just as the world is *represented* complementarily in the text in a form equivalent to pictorial representation, as a simulacrum.

This is all accomplished in the name of some reality principle (“Life,” “truth,” “biography,” “sense”) to which the text is subordinated. It is a subjugation enunciated from the outset by the semantic history of the word *character*: coming from the Greek *kharattein*, to engrave, it is first the mark, the drawn, written, preserved sign; then the *title*, natural or legal, which confers a rank, a right. . . . A mark, then, by which the “character” is assured to be that which has been characterized and refers back to the stamp, to the origin. It includes in its lexical

deconstruction of the sexist alignment of women with the unspeaking and unspeakable other, as well as her challenge to the Hegelian dynamic of appropriation, opens important avenues of ethical investigation for nonfoundational feminisms and intersubjectivity in the postmodern lesbian texts I examine.

With its long history of asking what woman wants, what woman is, and what are the linguistic foundations of knowledge, the masculinist psychoanalysis of Freud and Lacan has become a productive area for feminist critique. Derrida's use of Freud, if not also of Lacan,⁹ becomes the springboard for Judith Butler's deconstruction of gender (and sex) as cultural production rather than biological identity or truth. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* Butler argues the repeated need for performances of normative engenderment provides evidence not only of the absence of originary gendered and sexual identities but also of the instability of these categories within the discursive

evolution — that part connected with expression ("he's a person of 'character'"). with description — the art of the portrait; with the distinguishing mark, it is that which morally differentiates one person from another. Figuratively, it is designed more and more to function as an active element in the process of social coding — to the point of becoming an "account," a certificate of conformity, the very mark of the intervention of the censor . . . the role of roles. (385-86)

⁹Derrida and Lacan argue that subjectivity and foundational beliefs are the effect of the sign and external social regulations and practices. Freud also connects the development of a subject to its socialization, rather than to an essential truth. In Freud's theory of individuation, a subject develops by internalizing social regulation in the form of the body-ego and the moral super-ego. Before the prohibitive Oedipal law that enables identification and the sublation of difference, there is only the polymorphic perversity of the baby's fragmented sense of the world and an unorganized body that is not a subject.

construction of the subject. Her theory that performances engender and create subjects who can never identically reflect the impossible purity of the law of gender draws heavily on Derrida. His theory of the elliptical return of difference within the performative act of textually inscribed 'being' is implicit in his investigation of the difference between the abstract law of justice and its limited performances of material interpretation ("Force of Law").¹⁰ Butler insists that the performances of gender and sexuality never identically repeat the position that is naturalized (but abstract and unrealizable) as normative because they are inscribed within a chain of contingent supplements that defer connection with any originary idea(l). Such production of difference functions through a cultural analogy of concepts and performances that reflect Derrida's discussion of the production of meaning through the contextual differences of words and letters in relation to each other rather than to any originary concept. For Derrida, this is the "call to the other," the movement toward the unknown that is unthinkable in a Hegelian metaphysics premised

¹⁰In "Force of Law," Derrida argues that the possibility of difference can open into the previously unknown and unthought in the play between the concrete performative and the impossible purity of an abstract sense of justice:

Paradoxically, it is because of this overflowing of the performative, because of this always excessive haste of interpretation getting ahead of itself, because of this structural urgency and precipitation of justice that the latter has no horizon of expectation (regulative or messianic). But for this very reason, it *may* have an *avenir*, a "to come," which I rigorously distinguish from the future that can always reproduce the presence. . . . Perhaps it is for this reason that justice, insofar as it is not only a juridical or political concept, opens up for *l'avenir* the transformation, the recasting or refounding of law and politics. "Perhaps," one must always say perhaps for justice. There is an *avenir* for justice and there is no justice except to the degree that some event is possible which, as event, exceeds calculations, rules, programs, anticipations and so forth. Justice as the experience of absolute alterity is unrepresentable, but it is the chance of event and the condition of history. (27)

on the hierarchical and binary separation of self and other. For Butler, the elliptical return of difference enables new concepts and performances of sex to emerge. Butler's theory of performative drag, a parodic mimicry of excessive femininity, masculinity, or crossing of genders, always reveals its difference from the naturalized normative law of gender that it is required to rehearse and repeat. The torsion of performative drag, or "drague[ant]" as Brossard writes the desedimenting dredging of muck that sweeps out the constitutive elements that mine the field of subjectivity with a violence,¹¹ enables these postmodern lesbian writers to develop a lesbian intersubjectivity that does not rely on a pre-linguistic body that challenges the deformations of discursive construction as in Kristeva's theory of the semiotic *chora*.

The Postcolonial Theory of Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak

Rather than seeing the cultural difference that Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand inscribe in a lesbian relation to national or patriarchal cultures as an essentialist outside of prediscursive location, the postcolonial theory of Bhabha and Spivak enables me to argue that, because culture is already heterogenous, divided, and has no pure location, new inscriptions of sense continually come from within. This return of difference within the social inscription of the discursive subject also enables Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak

¹¹These meanings come from the double implication of Brossard's word "drague" (*Le désert mauve* 74) in the verb *draguer*, 'to dredge, to drag,' and the noun in the phrase *le dragueur des mines*, 'minesweeper.' Meaning moves beyond dualism in the transgressive absence of fidelity to linguistic systems of containment in the virtual movement of "drague" toward the English *dragon* in the becoming-dragon of the lesbians in the text.

to theorize a postcolonial agency without relying on a pre-social or pre-linguistic originary subject.¹² Bhabha quotes and directly acknowledges Derrida's theoretical influence. In Bhabha's postcolonial deconstruction of cultural unity in *The Location of Culture*, the double action of the supplement is both the "pedagogical" accumulation of "presence" (that creates the effect of an originary unity between the signifier and the signified in the accumulative repetition) and a "performative" "proxy" (a displacement, standing in for an absent something elsewhere) (154).¹³ In a discussion of the hybrid movement of cultural meaning away from the originary authority of colonial or nativist definition, Bhabha describes a split within cultural production that is inscribed in the

¹²Spivak discusses the agency of the sign under erasure in Derrida's concept of "*différance*," by focusing on "three moments in the quotation [from Derrida] — 'differing,' 'deferring,' and 'detour'" (*Of Grammatology* xlii).

¹³Bhabha writes:

The heterogenous structure of Derridean supplementarity in *writing* closely follows the agonistic, ambivalent movement between the pedagogical and performative that informs the nation's narrative address. A supplement, according to one meaning [quoting Derrida's *Of Grammatology*], "cumulates and accumulates presence. It is thus that art, *technē*, image, representation, convention, etc. come as supplements to nature and are rich with this entire cumulating function" (pedagogical). The *double entendre* of the supplement suggests, however, that [quoting Derrida again]

[It] intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*. . . . If it represents and makes an image it is by the *anterior* default of a presence. . . . the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance. . . . As substitute, it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief. . . . Somewhere, something can be filled up of *itself*. . . only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy. (performative)

It is in this supplementary space of doubling — *not plurality* — where the image is presence and proxy, where the sign supplements and empties nature, that the disjunctive times of Fanon and Kristeva can be turned into the discourses of emergent cultural identities, within a non-pluralistic politics of difference. (*Location of Culture* 154)

process of enunciation itself. The agency for the creation of new meanings in cultural subjects depends not on the presence of identity but on the absence of any necessary connection between a sign and its meaning and a split between the subject who is speaking (énonciation) and the subject (content) of what is spoken (énoncé). Meaning shifts between “historicist teleological or mythical time” of national unitary fictions and the “necessary negotiations and shifts within the present” performance that affirm a living, active culture (35). The split between the subject of the spoken statement (énoncé) and the subject who speaks the statement (énonciation) creates a destabilizing and enabling set of relations where such Western values as freedom, liberty, and democracy change meaning as they are inscribed on the colonizer who upholds these values to justify an improvement narrative of colonization yet violates the principles of these concepts by imposing them on the colonized.¹⁴ “Discursive positioning” is an ambivalent movement between the traces of the speaker in the text that change the effect of the spoken, the effect of the text’s inscriptions on the speaker and the addressee, and what the listeners do

¹⁴Nietzsche’s theory of *ressentiment* develops a similar position of resistance that is neither originary identity nor complete definition through the “master.” He compares the power of the reactive oppositional narrative of a dominated people to the lesser power of the Hegelian principle of appropriation within the master’s discourse:

For he [the master] desires his enemy [the slave] for himself, as his mark of distinction: he can endure no other enemy than one in whom there is nothing to despise and *very much* to honor [in his own ability to love his enemy]! In contrast to this, picture “the enemy” as the man of *ressentiment* conceives him — and here precisely is his deed, his creation: he has conceived “the evil enemy,” “*the Evil One*,” and this in fact is his basic concept, from which he then evolves, as an afterthought and pendant, a “good one” — himself! (*On the Genealogy of Morals* 39)

with these traces and inscriptions.¹⁵ The “discursive positioning” in a statement is “neither one nor the other but an ambivalence between” (neither speaking nor spoken subject, neither mythical unitary past nor disruptive present). The disruption of cultural stability disables the perceived continuity between past and present that “authorize[s] that subject of cultural knowledge” (Bhabha 36). The discontinuous and conflictual movement between the past and the present opens a “time-lag” (183) in the “sign’s seizure/caesura of symbolic synchronicity” (193) that is neither the continuous reproduction of homogeneous or heterogeneous historical narratives of nation nor the evacuation of mythic and historic narratives in a utopian present disjunctive. In each of the novels I examine, the lack of equivalence between the speaker and the spoken and the seizure/caesura of time open spaces for the articulation of different symbolic systems that provide a critique of and alternative to white heteropatriarchal significance without relying on a pre-linguistic originary body or falling into nostalgic longing for a time before a postulated Western phallogocentric fall.

Since Bhabha draws extensively on the psychoanalytic theory of Frantz Fanon and Jacques Lacan, the difference in his use of the term “symbolic synchronicity” is revealing. For Lacan, knowledge is produced by the continual desire for an impossible return of the symbolic to the originary site of inarticulable being. Desiring production is based on lack inscribed by the division between language and body that creates an

¹⁵In this explanation of “discursive positing,” I have modified Elizabeth Grosz’s argument, in *Space, Time, and Perversion*, that the discursive position of the lesbian in the text is a relation between author, text, and reader (18).

absence of the one in the other and a desire for the unknowable repressed other. For Bhabha, new knowledge is developed in the continual movement (with and against national unity) in a symbolic that is already the embodied and heterogenous site of physical, geographical, and narrative differences in colonial and postcolonial space, a space that is necessarily partial rather than inadequate. Colonizing and colonized subjects struggle with and against each other, forming psychical relations and definitions that emerge as neither original. Maude Laures's Québécoise translation of an already French-American text in Brossard's *Le désert mauve* and the "contamination"¹⁶ of Suzanne's ancestral British 'imperial purity' by South Asian and South-East Asian languages in Marlatt's *Taken* develop a hybrid multiplicity that deregulates the systemic enclosure of heteropatriarchal regulation and opens potential lines of flight for a lesbian desiring intersubject. The heterogeneity of incommensurable symbolic inscriptions, combined with the evacuation of any essential relation between the speaker and the spoken, opens an aporia between nothing and everything for the allegorical displacement of meaning in the novels of these three writers. Allegorical displacement inscribes both an excess of

¹⁶The term *contamination* is used strategically in postcolonial theory to comment on the racist assumptions of imperialism. Like the term *queer* for gender theory and the term *hybridity* in postcolonial theory, the repossession of the term *contamination* emphasizes a "conscious and politically motivated concern with the deliberate disruption of homogeneity." Like the term *miscegenation*, *contamination* also resists the colonial "desire to maintain the separation between *civilized* and *savage*" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Key Concepts* 120, 142-43). Diana Brydon uses the term *contamination* in "The White Inuit Speaks: Contamination as a Literary Strategy" to describe "a new globalism . . . [that] simultaneously asserts local independence and global interdependencies. It seeks a way to cooperate without cooption, a way to define differences that do not depend on myths of cultural purity or authenticity but that thrive on an interaction that 'contaminates' without homogenising" (100).

incommensurable symbolic/mythical referents and an evacuation of colonizing/commodifying meaning in the absence (not lack) of a teleological referent. This teleological absence, which is not a pre-linguistic originary essence or a cultural identity, enables Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand to challenge the authority of normative cultural inscriptions and create emergent becomings and senses in a “desiring writing” that never reaches the closure of full presence.

Bhabha’s theory of an unstable, nonfoundational, and “agonistic”¹⁷ contradiction that severs continuity within the time line is based not on an originary presence or lack¹⁸ but on the refusal of the colonizer’s ability to inscribe disembodied, neutral truths. The agency for the seizure/caesura of time and symbolic inscription comes through the

¹⁷The agonistic aspect of speech acts that establish the nonfoundational meaning or truth of such things as culture, the subject, or being is explained by Jean-François Lyotard as the one-up-man-ship of discourse itself. A proposition is responded to, contested, or supported by the next speaker. Lyotard argues that, while each speaker seeks to supplant the previous speaker in the identification of ‘truth,’ to wish an end to such an agonistic pragmatics would be equivalent to a desire for totalitarian silence. In Lyotard’s conception of agonistic speech acts, each statement is made with the acknowledgement of the demise of grand narratives of truth and can only be postulated in the specific and limited contexts of a “petit récit” (*Postmodern Condition* 16, 63).

¹⁸Originary presence and unity relies on a teleological or systemic definition of what that God or truth might be. This raises problems for the study of cultural differences. In *Colonial Desire*, Robert J.C. Young problematizes the psychoanalytic reliance on “original unity” for a deconstructive approach to postcolonial issues. Young argues that much of the debate within the disciplinary genealogy of ethnology and ethnography stems from the issue of whether aboriginal peoples spring from a unified “original” human figure, or whether humanity is divided at origin. An originary division of humanity justifies the Eurocentric progressivist narrative of educating aboriginal peoples ‘up’ to European standards of civilization. If united at origin, the development of aboriginal cultures shows the deterioration of a race. Both views enable a racist Eurocentric practice.

inability to equate the speaker with the spoken and the subject with object when the ‘object’ speaks. Agency comes through the Hegelian distortion of the other that Spivak describes as the embodiment of resistance in irrecoverable difference: “I do not recognize myself in the object of your benevolence” (*Outside* 137). This position is not outside the discursive construction of the subject but very much embedded in the historical inscriptions of the colonized by the colonizer and vice versa. Bhabha writes:

The evil eye, which is nothing in itself, exists in its lethal traces or effects as a form of iteration that arrests time — death/chaos — and initiates a space of *intercutting* that articulates politics/psyche, sexuality/race. It does this in a relation that is differential and strategic rather than originary, ambivalent rather than accumulative, doubling rather than dialectical . . . dealing death, extinguishing both presence and the present. (*Location* 55-56)

The absence in Bhabha’s theory of hybridity is not based on the *lack* of immediate connection with originary truth or the presence of originary culture outside colonization (*Location* 49) but occurs in the displacement of cultural locations and inscriptions. The contra-dictory multiplicity of this death-dealing agency that strategically deploys the absence “that is the beginning of presencing” (Bhabha 9) reveals the repression and commodification that construct the speaking subject as an object. Negating such absence without assuming the presence of a subject, the evil eye in each of the novels becomes a speaking intersubject who neither controls nor is completely controlled by the objectified representation of subjects as definable objects. Words, as linguistic objects, ‘speak’ as they form the quantum connections of intersubjects with other words in the linguistic drift

of sound with no representational meaning. Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* deploys the absent gaze of the Medusa extensively. Agency for change develops in Adela's suicidal and murderous negation of herself as subject or object and in the lines of escape Elizete finds in her maternal genealogy of forgetting and erasure. The double absence of the subject and the object resists interpellation and returns the gaze of racism to the colonizer. As Verlia leaps off the cliff, the absent subject and object reiterates a suicidal narrative of the death-dealing evil eye that resists murder by the invading colonizing forces.¹⁹ Without the organization of a subject and refusing to be the object of neo-colonial intent, Verlia's leap becomes an electrified arc of quantum presence. In S-matrix theory, particle charges and directions can be read as the opposite simply by rotating the channel of observation. As an intersubject without the solidity of a subject, Verlia's absence can be read as the arc of subatomic electrical energy and insubstantial presence that links with a genealogy of negation. This genealogy shifts the angle of vision, changes the meaning of presence and absence, and inscribes a death-dealing, revolutionary resistance in quantum particles that in themselves are not substances and thus resist the subject/object binary of colonizing thought.

The intensity of absence disperses like particles and antiparticles that can "turn

¹⁹This narrative is repeated in the stories of Adela, Verlia, Elizete, and the woman Elizete was given to, as well as in the historic leap of the Caribs from Sauteurs to avoid colonization and in Marie-Ursele's organization of a mass poisoning among the slaves in Brand's *At the Full and Change of the Moon*. Brand also comments in *Bread Out of Stone* that she wanted to die when she was in Grenada during the invasion: "I wanted a day when they [the American invading force] would be compelled by that same spell which enveloped me, and their weapons would seize up or they would run away with screams in their heads. And at least if that did not happen I wanted to die" (132).

pure energy into the reverse process of annihilation” (Capra 81) throughout Brand’s text. This generates a resisting presence through “unspoken pasts that haunt the historical present” (Bhabha 12) and a “ghostly discourse that enters . . . ‘from the outside’ in order to reveal the transitional world of the aftermath of slavery . . . its historical past and its narrative present” (15). The proliferation throughout the text of intense absence in Adela, Verlia, and the unnamed woman Elizete was given to changes Elizete’s struggle with the displacement of Canadian racism from struggle against the absence of an originary subject in racist imperialism to a strategy of resistance and ghostly presence without a subject. Her becoming presence does not rely on an original precolonial past but is created in the elliptical return of *différance* in the absence of proper location for the subject of speaking and meaning in language. A death-dealing absence reveals the repressed connections between past and present narratives of slavery, colonization, resistance, freedom, liberty, democracy, and communism. Without relying on an oppositional subject, the gaze of the Medusa reveals the absence of originary authority by exposing the contradictions that are endemic to Western symbolic conceptions of a democratic nation-state that invades another in the name of liberty.

Derrida’s discussion of apartheid and his argument that the terms of European racism and ethnocentrism are embedded in anti-racist and anti-ethnocentric struggle (“Racism’s Last Word”) inform Spivak’s and Bhabha’s conceptions of hybridity differently.²⁰ Bhabha combines Derridean deconstruction with extensive psychoanalytic

²⁰While Bhabha is generally acknowledged as the theorist of hybridity and Spivak of Marxism, feminism, and deconstruction, Spivak’s discussion of the influence of

theory (Lacan, Fanon, Freud), while Spivak combines Derridean deconstruction with Marxism and feminism. Bhabha's hybridity develops in the split subject that "cannot be apprehended without its constitutive absence or invisibility" that is created by the gaze of the dominant culture (47). He also discusses a hybridity in which "a meaning that is culturally alien" (135) creates an "unheimlich difference within the same when cultural authority is translated" into different cultural contexts (136). Following Derrida's focus on the state, Spivak responds to the enabling European regulative political concepts that are claimed with the acknowledgement that they have "no adequate historical reference" in precolonial space (*Outside* 213), an acknowledgement of their catachrestic basis. Battles over "nationhood, constitutionality, citizenship, democracy, socialism, . . . culturalism . . . [and] feminism [as] the named movement" are all legacies of imperialism (*Outside* 144). Spivak argues that, while these concept-metaphors enable the political action of decolonization, they are, nonetheless, "structures of enabling violence" that must be negotiated to avoid an unquestioning assimilation of the colonizer's values as well as to avoid reducing the struggle for decolonization to simplistic claims for rights based on identity (145).

Bhabha's conception of a completely unstable, ghostly presence that rises within the supplementary splitting of the sign from originary 'truth' is a psychoanalytically developed deviation from Spivak's earlier term of "strategic essentialism." A complete refusal of essentialism is impossible within deconstruction, Spivak argues, because the

European political and philosophic concepts in the non-West is, in fact, a discussion of the enabling absence of foundational meaning created in hybridity.

deconstructive critic inhabits those concepts of Western metaphysics (such as the category of women that enables an anti-sexist or liberatory discourse) and shows where the systems fail, where they come to a “crisis” within their own terms.²¹ The failure of the category of women to include the subaltern, or the failure of liberatory discourse when it is shown to be premised on the abstract concepts of the Western state that the oppressed seek to be liberated from, reveal the nonfoundational basis of any of the strategically essentialist terms that Spivak employs. In my own project, by bringing together lesbian and feminist theory, deconstruction, postcolonialism, Deleuzian poststructuralism, and Marxist dialectics, I will enable the deconstructive crisis that reveals and transgresses the methodological containment of any singularly focused theory. The parameters that define the field of investigation for any one of these deconstructive theorists cannot adequately explain the Canadian and Québécoise postcolonial hybridities of an anti-capitalist and anti-sexist lesbian “desiring writing” with a poststructuralist bent. Yet, by using the terms and fields of investigation of these various theorists as partial elements that begin to contaminate each other, certain strategic nominations can produce a rhizomatic discourse that attends the postcolonial hybridities of Canadian and Québécoise lesbian poststructuralism.

Spivak argues that “strategic essentialism” is the postulation of the most minimal

²¹Spivak provides the example of the crisis of meaning that is established by the negotiation of feminist theory with Marxist theory. Rather than espousing a transitional point of convergence that would resolve the dialectic, Spivak argues that the continual point of crisis needs to be maintained to avoid the quietism in which the contradictions would disappear.

essence of substances, a word under erasure, a substance that is not solid, a residual that retains difference and enables exchange.²² As a substance, substantive, or noun, “strategic essentialism” is also “nominalist power” in “catachrestic proximity” (*Outside* 26).²³ A catachresis is the mistake of the metaphor for the original idea (the ‘leg of a table’), a mistake in which the ‘original metaphoricity’ has been lost and the term is taken as a literal name. It is Derrida’s “supplement.” For Spivak, naming is power, but it can only act as a strategic and political figuration²⁴ rather than as a basis for truth. Brand’s Elizete

²²Spivak writes:

Essences . . . are just a kind of content. All content is not essence. Why be so nervous about it? Why not demote the word ‘essence,’ because without a minimalizable essence, an essence as *ce qui reste*, an essence as what remains, there is no exchange. Difference articulates these negotiable essences. There is no time for essence/anti-essence. There is so much work to be done. (*Outside* 18)

²³While Butler follows a deconstructive approach, her resistance to nominalist power (such as Spivak’s “strategic essentialism” that would simultaneously deconstruct and regroup the category of women to enable an anti-sexist politics) forgets the impossible solidity within the deconstructive concept of nouns (substantives) and substances. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler writes: “As free-floating attributes, . . . gender cannot be grasped through the substantializing and hierarchizing grammar of nouns (*res extensa*) and adjectives (attributes, essential and accidental)” (24). Butler’s deconstruction of solid substance seems to forget that the noun of the supplement is always in movement within the chain of metaphors and always under erasure (i.e., the noun, or substantive, is never solidly substantial). All of the writers in my study emphasize the fluid constitution of the intersubject as continual actions of becoming, rather than a completed action that sediments a fixed subject. The evacuation of the subject/object and self/other separation within each of the novels also intrinsically questions the grammar of Western language that establishes the subject as the cause of action on an object. The intersubjectivity within these novels puts the subject under erasure as the effect of partial discourses and performances that can never remain true to any law/system.

²⁴Emphasizing the strategic and political use of the word “figuration” in feminist theory, Rosi Braidotti notes, “The term *figuration* refers to a style of thought that evokes or expresses ways out of the phallogocentric vision of the subject. A figuration is a politically informed account of an alternative subjectivity” (1).

deploys such power in naming local Caribbean places that do not regularly appear in Western literature, history, or geography, as well as in naming plants and trees through a poetic, concrete, and local demotic Caribbean language. Yet the solidity of a confining and exclusive territorial definition through a name disappears as the ability to tie the name firmly with the national and geographical place comes loose: names become sounds that evacuate meaning and enable escape from the colonization of sense. Nominalist power acts with the agency of the local discourse that Bhabha argues inscribes the differences in the present performance of culture that enable a ghostly return of presence without a subject, identity, or foundational referent. Following such a procedure of catachrestic nominalism, bodies and locations can be posited as signs of mobile meanings that begin to appear in contextual relation as the categorical concept is put under erasure. Such erasure can avoid the solidification of systemic meaning that commodifies sexuality through essentialist and (hetero)sexist alignments of sex-gender-desire or displaces embodiment and sexuality onto the racial ‘other.’²⁵

This Derridean “yes and no” in the use and refusal of categorical meaning moves beyond binary opposition in order to push the limits of knowledge into the otherness of

²⁵In *Bread Out of Stone*, Brand describes the difficulty she confronts:

In a world where Black women’s bodies are so sexualized, avoiding the body as sexual is a strategy. So is writing it in the most conservative terms, striving in the text for conformity to the norm of monogamous heterosexual gratification. Leaving pleasure to men, that’s a strategy, too. I know that not talking about the sexual Black female self at all is as much an anti-colonial strategy as armed struggle. But what a trap. . . . For me the most radical strategy of the female body for itself is the lesbian body confessing all the desire and fascination for itself. (27, 46)

what is not yet known. In *Double Reading: Postmodernism after Deconstruction*, Jeffrey Nealon argues that the difference between Derrida's writing and the Yale school's interpretation of deconstruction via the studies of Jonathan Culler, Paul de Mann, and J. Hillis Miller, rather than Derrida's actual texts, is political. In the Yale school of deconstruction, the role of double reading becomes the deadlocked aporia of opposition that can only lead to political stagnation, unreadability, and success as a failure to choose. Such absence of meaning, analysis, and agency for change in a nonfoundational aporia, Nealon argues, characterizes the conservatism of the Yale school of deconstruction and led to the demise of deconstruction in American universities (27). Contrarily, Derrida insists that contradiction reveals the absence of foundational authority and "starts reading and writing and translation moving again . . . gives it momentum, movement, sets it in motion" (qtd. in Nealon 36). This affirmative use of contradiction and difference that returns in the category of the same is the radical political strategy of catachrestic nominalism that changes (what is taken for) the real in the novels I examine. Such naming without the authority of a foundational referent and with the political goal of ethical negotiation explores, as Nealon argues quoting Rodolphe Gashé's *The Tain of the Mirror*, knowledge at the limits of noun, image, concept, content, and form. Nealon writes, "It is in the exploration of these limits from which understanding and knowing become possible in a postmodern context that I see a possible relation between deconstruction and postmodern literary texts" (85).

Nominalism allows language to take place: ". . . a structure governed by a privilege of representation is what makes it possible for me to say anything at all"

(Nealon 86). But in deconstructive postmodernism, the nomination becomes catachrestic, that is, nonfoundational but not evacuated of all meaning. Nealon argues that, in postmodernism, “. . . an entire system of thinking through which one constructs categories and defines the world . . . begins to draw to a close” (82). Consequently, “. . . we need to think about what it might mean to come to the limits of the structure of representation (the limits of modern subjectivity) . . . while still inhabiting a discursive world made possible by the traces of this structure” (Nealon 88). In Marlatt’s *Taken*, bodies are signs of difference and mobile elements that enable communication without the categorical analysis of names that solidify and separate. Instead, communication becomes a reciprocal exchange through proximity that enables differences between bodies, between bodies and languages, between bodies, languages, nations, sexualities, races, geographies, and histories to touch and change each other. Such change in elemental substance occurs through the literary practice of a catachrestic nominalism that has no foundational, original, or essential meaning. I will come back to the issue of inscriptions on and of bodies in my discussion of the points of crisis between these deconstructive methodologies that raise enabling and disabling issues for a postmodern lesbian deconstruction in Canada and Québec.

Spivak’s long and close relationship with Derridean theory is clear from her 1974 translation of Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*, which includes a lengthy “Translator’s Preface” that develops the history and meaning of Derridean deconstruction up to the date of her publication. While Derridean theory influences her critical work, Spivak is no mere interpreter. Drawing on Marxism, Spivak argues that a more extensive knowledge of Karl

Marx's theories of capital and "use-value" would have developed "a more rigorous critique" of Eurocentric capitalist idealism in Derrida's insistence that "We are all Europeans" (*Outside* 112-13). Spivak also argues that the major difference in colonial dynamics between "command versus desire," or between "the Western longing for the non-West" and the "command of the non-West's turn to the West," "marks the place of the crisis" that reveals the limitations of Western theory (*Postcolonial Critic* 8). The "epistemological violence" that establishes the codes of European desire within the colonized nation (126) places the native "within the European desire to turn towards the East [the desire for the other], but now it is doubly displaced" (8) by the Third World collusion of "comprador capitalists" with white global imperialism (126). This difference between desire and command in Spivak's Marxist examination of a deconstructive hybridity becomes fundamental to my examination of the difference between the desire for the other in Marlatt's *Taken* and the command to be and desire the other in Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*.

Spivak's Marxist definition of "use-value" leads her to make connections with Deleuze and Guattari's "exten[sion of] the range of the Marxian argument" in their discussion of capitalism's management of the social crisis created through the abstraction of capital. Capital, Spivak writes, "decoded and deterritorialized the socius by releasing the abstract as such" (*Outside* 62). Capital, like language and thought, abstracts "use-value" from the concrete labour of bodies that sustain life and disperses "use-value" into the larger field of national and global economies. The abstraction of "use-value" into capital (or language) encourages the production of a surplus beyond what is natural or

necessary for bodies to live²⁶ and disconnects any immediate relation between labour and life and the gender embedded in roles of social production and reproduction. Yet *capital* and *capitalism* are not the same. Spivak distinguishes between the deterritorialization of capital and the reterritorialization of capitalism: “Capital is antiessentializing because it is the abstract as such.” But, she insists, *capital* and *capitalism* must be analyzed differently to reveal the reterritorializing effects of capitalism: “Capitalism manages the contradictions inherent in capital in its own interests” (*Outside* 13, 107). As I will argue in a subsection of “Issues” entitled “The Relation of Anti-Oedipus to Language and Desire,” a grapho-centrism, or a reduction of corporeality to a meaningless substance outside of language and sense making, manages the contradictions of deterritorializing abstraction in language in the interests of a hetero-patriarchal system. “Use-value” is marked with abstract, ideologically weighted exchange values that support the racist, sexist, heterosexist, and hierarchical organization of a global imperialist society. The abstract “surplus value” of capitalist production is recuperated by ideological value codings that are in excess of the conservation of life and produce imperialist wealth through the absorption of what the regulatory socius deems in excess of the “use-value” of the social and economically ranked individual life.²⁷ While Robert J.C. Young cautions

²⁶The analogy for a deterritorializing abstraction of language is the production of a surplus beyond what is representational.

²⁷Jeff Derksen argues that national control over “surplus-value” is produced in Canada’s multicultural code. The multicultural act “is designed to alleviate [racial and ethnic] subordination under the auspices of ‘full access.’” Briefly discussing the “antisystemic gestures” that occur “on the semantic level in “no language is neutral,” he writes, “Countering the positive immigrant experience where ‘full participation’ is

against accepting Deleuze and Guattari's nomadism as "a radically anti-capitalist strategy [because] nomadism is, rather, one brutal characteristic mode of capitalism itself" (173), Spivak's distinction between capital and capitalism and the potential for deconstruction with such deterritorializing abstractions as capital is useful. Brand's global and deterritorialized, postcolonial Marxism criticizes the regulating role of capital supported by the military that enforces First World-Third World oppressive relations, yet her strategy abstracts into nomadic transgression. Such contradiction resists total acceptance and total rejection: deterritorialized abstractions open potential for new lines of thought and productions, but they are also more easily reterritorialized through surplus over codings such as the Oedipus complex because they have no substantial territorial corporeality. Brand's use of the Derridean double voice, the "yes and yes," which is also "yes and no," transgresses strategically between the two in order to deploy contingently the enabling positions of each.

achieved, Brand enacts language as the mark that links race and class in an economic system that relies on such marked subjects for a source of cheap labour, a labour that is gendered as well" (66). Further, he writes,

In the emphasis toward "full participation" in the economic and political life of Canada, an ethnic or racialized subject is interpellated by the act more properly as a commodity within the race-labour system of Canada. . . . "[F]ull participation" comes to mean the ability to create surplus value in Canadian society . . . [and] constructs racialized and ethnic subjects as labour commodities through which surplus value is created whether it is via low-paying and commonly dangerous jobs . . . or . . . as sources of investment capital. Multiculturalism, then, functions as the ideological and economic management of diversity and is best analyzed within a matrix of race, class, ethnicity, and gender and their relations to the means of production and reproduction. (62-63)

The Schizoanalysis of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

In *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that social regulation is achieved by the reterritorialization of affective coding through Oedipal desire. In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, they identify Oedipus as “the market value of neurosis,” a “*desire that is already submissive and searching to communicate its own submission.*” Rather than a “micropolitics of desire, of impasses and escapes, of submissions and rectifications” that seek new positions and knowledges, Oedipus struggles “to become free in relation to him [the Name of the Father]” and always submits to impossibility. By “Deterritorializing Oedipus into the world instead of reterritorizing everything in Oedipus and the family” (10), the essentialist reduction of desire becomes evident and reveals a movement where (so-called Oedipal) submission and enclosure continually meet with (non-Oedipal) escape that produces change. The Oedipal commodification of knowledge, subjectivity, and desire means that real conditions of social and political regulation can be dismissed as the necessary displacement of subjects in language and social relations. In the Oedipal framework, language and corporeality are necessarily separated. This means that in a poststructuralism that develops out of Oedipal dynamics, corporeality can be dismissed as an essentialism that relies on a pre-symbolic outside the discursive construction of the subject. In Oedipal relations, the spoken subject is necessarily objectified and commodified. Rather than trying to change colonizing representations or the Hegelian manner of thinking about people and ideas as subjects and objects, depth psychology controls and suppresses cultural dissent and distress with social roles and regulations by

arguing that the organization of heterogeneous parts into an Oedipal whole is essential to the constitution of the subject. The Oedipal economy displaces heterogeneous linguistic production as the surface of unavoidable, objectified solidity and displaces bodily production into nostalgic longing for impossible originary unity. Supplementary commodities for the consumption of knowledge submit to the inevitability of failure, repression, and *méconnaissance*. Deconstructive ‘success’ becomes the inevitability of failure. The lesbian “desiring writing” in each of the novels questions such reduction of linguistic knowledge to stable objects and investigates the potential of a mobile, porous language to produce fluid and hybrid ways of thinking that resist the colonization of the binary other.

Spivak’s work on the Oedipal construction of the capitalist economy enables me to make rhizomatic links between the poststructuralist theory of Deleuze and Guattari and postcolonial, deconstructive, and feminist theories to provoke a postmodern lesbian and feminist critique²⁸ of the heterosexual Oedipal economy. Spivak’s use of Deleuze and Guattari as a challenge, not to deconstruction, but as part of the deconstructive project and as a challenge to Derrida’s limited critique of “use-value,” connects the

²⁸Following the concept that postmodernism is a continuation of Modernist investigations of identity, gender, and race with the catachrestic difference that places the categorical meanings of the terms under erasure and a continuation of the Modernist sense of fragmentation with the affirmative difference of newness in the collision of partialities rather than of alienation and lack without a whole, I am tempted to use the terms *post-feminist* and *post-lesbian* as a continuation of Modernist terms of identity with the differences of an intersubjectivity that has no subject or object of desire or description. However, these terms have been so freighted with the right-wing backlash of sexist and heterosexist rhetoric that I continue to avoid them.

poststructuralism of Deleuze and Guattari with Derridean deconstructions founded on Nietzsche's challenge to transcendental values. Spivak's argument about the feminization of poverty specifically focuses the anti-Oedipal theory of Deleuze and Guattari in a feminist and postcolonial framework, aspects Deleuze and Guattari ignore. She argues that capitalism establishes an "indigenous patriarchy" (*Postcolonial Critic* 126) and inscribes an Oedipal "use-value" that makes women's production and reproduction less valuable. Deleuze and Guattari call their anti-Oedipal theory "schizoanalysis." In Spivak's postcolonial, feminist, deconstructive theory, it becomes "Imperialism and Schizophrenia": the act of deconstructing the interwoven sexism and capitalism of Oedipal imperialism (*Outside* 225-26). Thus, Spivak's Marxist-feminist deconstruction acts as a rhizomatic node of deferral, detour, and *différance* that links Derridean deconstruction with the anti-Oedipal and anti-capitalist theory of Deleuze and Guattari, the postcolonialism of Bhabha, and the feminist theory of Irigaray and Butler.

Chapter 3. Issues

In the preceding outline of the connections between these theorists, I have necessarily raised some of the pertinent issues of intersubjective agency, hybridity, and politics in deconstruction. In this section, I will focus on the points of crisis raised between Derridean deconstruction and female embodiment, feminist ethics, and an anti-Oedipal theory. Deleuze and Guattari's anti-Oedipal theory reveals the limits of Derrida's grapho-centrism, while feminist theory brings the theories of Derrida and Deleuze and Guattari to a crisis that reveals the masculinist limitations of each for an intersubjective, lesbian "desiring writing." Irigaray's feminist ethics push beyond a Hegelian self/other dialectic in the loving connection between incommensurable differences of gender. Her theory of proximate connection without appropriation provides a point of departure for a lesbian intersubjectivity in which the bodies/signs of corporeality, language, geography, history, fiction, race, and nation touch and change each other without taking over, reterritorializing, or erasing each other. However, Irigaray's feminist ethics reveal their limits in a "divine" heterosexuality, a restrictive focus on gender, and a complete eradication of the agonistic violence of thought and analysis that enables the displacement of sedentary and phallo(go)centric thought, knowledge, and values. In addition to the loving proximity of nonfoundational coalition politics and a feminist ethics that does not represent or define *lesbian* except as the intensive return to the sites of between-women desiring production, each of the novels insists on the inclusion of what Deleuze and Guattari call a war machine. A certain violence of thought is necessary to demolish the organization of systemic or state space that inscribes the bodies of women and language

in disabling ways and to open spaces for new connections in the explosion of categorical separation, distinction, and exclusion.

The Relation of Anti-Oedipus to Language and Desire

Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the relation of capitalism to the Oedipal economy enables a lesbian and feminist theory of deterritorialized desire that moves on the surfaces of signs without representational depth and displacement. This enables a *jouissance* beyond the abjection of phallic lack. However, the term "becoming woman" and their ambiguous (resisting) support for feminist action raise problems of the blind-spots of masculinist thought disguised as a molecular neutrality that I will discuss a little further on. A lesbian desiring production makes no appearance at all in their theory, unless *lesbian* is subsumed by the monolithic grouping of nomadic "minorities."¹ Still, their argument against a theory of desire propelled by lack and the transcendental phallus provides an important springboard for lesbian and feminist language and desiring production outside the assertion of an inescapable (although impossible) law of normative socialization and inscription that creates a subject in the theories of both Butler and Derrida.²

¹Deleuze and Guattari argue that minorities and women are most often the groups that enact the nomadic war machine within dominant cultures and, thus, support feminist action on one level. However, they also argue that such organizing structures are "molar" and only stages on the way to the "becoming-imperceptible" of the completely deterritorialized "body without organs" (*Thousand Plateaus* 276).

²Derrida argues that there is no outside to the larger sense of writing as the movement of difference and deferral from the identical repetition of the previous metaphorical

Simply put, anti-Oedipal desire is Deleuze and Guattari's theory of changing and making the real world in the continual production of new concepts, emotions, and social relations as bodies come apart and come together. In *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that desire is not based on lack. It is "social production" itself (30). The Oedipal theory of lack is the "deliberate" organization of society by the "dominant class" in a consumer "market economy." Working between Marxist politics and Freudian investigations of the psyche, their anti-Oedipal theory explores desire as political and psychical production. The capitalist Oedipal economy controls capital's abstraction of use-value that is no longer based on bodily labour and organizes the wants and needs of society around the "fear of not having one's needs satisfied." It also makes the "object" of desire "dependent upon a real" person or object (a commodity) "that is supposed exterior to desire" itself, since desire-as-lack is the gap between the originary need and its represented demand. The interiorization of desire in

supplement. Butler argues that the law of gender proposes a normative structure that is impossible to reproduce within the heterogenous acts of daily performance. Both theorize difference but deconstruct any sense of a subject who is "outside" the system. While Derrida's call to the 'other' suggests a *possible* outside that is unknowable, perhaps only an effect of language itself, Butler more firmly connects the "outside" to a pre-linguistic, originary subject of agency that, she repeatedly argues, would be "wrong" to presume (*Gender Trouble* 15, 16). Butler's reliance on a unary subject of "identification" that materializes in language, a subject with a proper ego (even if she is "castrating"), is again demonstrated in the discussion of the "lesbian phallus" as a way to speak lesbian difference through the fetish produced by abjection (*Bodies That Matter* 57-91). The anti-Oedipal theory of Deleuze and Guattari that establishes the rhizomatic "body without organs" draws on innumerable outsides that act against the unary subject that emerges from the Oedipus complex. While Spivak cannot completely reject the possibility of an outside — ". . . something *else might* be going on" (*Postcolonial Critic* 53) — Deleuze and Guattari see the outside as the decoded flows of social and corporeal forces.

the unknowable depth of the subject and the exteriorization of its displaced object categorizes desire as “nothing but a fantasy” (28) and, therefore, not part of the real world or political action. If there is lack, Deleuze and Guattari argue, it is not in the object, but in the concept of the fixed subject and the sublimated “repression” that produces the Oedipal ego and super-ego (26) that regulate social roles and production.

Deleuze and Guattari counter the idea of desire-as-lack by arguing that desire produces in the “real” world (26). It is “passion, as a natural and sensuous” activity (27). The product created by desire is the product of social interaction. Thus desiring production as social production is the ongoing process that is not reality as a solidified and containable object but the continual “becoming of reality,” the continual changes within reality that depend on simultaneous heterogenous differences. Desire is the libidinal and heterogenous production of “*passive syntheses* that engineer partial objects, flows, and bodies” (26). Desire, as the connections and disconnections between things, is not a willed or even knowable production. In the non-unary, rhizomatic subject, “partial objects lack nothing” and form uncontrolled multiplicities that “never cease producing [the] flows” that are desiring-production without the sublation of Oedipal and state repression (295). Nomadic “desire does not take as its object persons or things, but the entire surroundings that it traverses, the vibrations and flows of every sort to which it is joined, introducing therein breaks and captures” (292). Such a desire pervades the becoming-lesbian of the novels I examine because they do not simply concern sexual relations between women. Desire expands into “a free energy capable of fueling a revolutionary machine” (*Anti-Oedipus* 293) — in this case, a revolutionary machine of

lesbian intersubjectivity that deploys the affective energy of continual production between women in a “desiring writing” that changes the real. The signs of sense inscribe at least a momentary between-women desiring production in the reader who also has no substantial, categorical body, no essential depth. This intersubjectivity can create social alliances in struggle for anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-imperialist, and anti-homophobic change. Further, the destabilization of the categorical distinction and separation between languages and bodies along with the resistance to the sublimation of heterogeneity in language itself pushes difference and discontent with social regulation to the surfaces of inscription where it can be challenged and changed. Without fidelity to any originary subject, be it an inscription of corporeal, social, judicial, cultural, or literary subjects, thought can leap on disorganized signs of sense to push beyond the already known into the unknown and currently unspeakable without relying on pre-linguistic essence.

The refusal of lack has major implications for a theory of language in deconstruction, since such Derridean metaphors as the “supplement,” “trace,” “hymen,” and “*différance*” can be seen to function within the Lacanian gap between the signified (need) and the signifier (its demand). In *Space, Time and Perversion*, Elizabeth Grosz argues that Derridean thought figures textuality in “a closed striated space of intense overcodings” (126), as a “failure to reach its destination,” the “impossibility of presence,” and the “deferral and detour” of “*différance*.” Contrarily, she argues, Deleuze emphasizes “difference” as “force,” “affirmation,” “positive desire . . . which *makes* a difference” (129). The Deleuzian text, she argues, enacts “modes of affectivity and action which, at their best, scatter thoughts and images into different linkages or new alignments without

necessarily destroying their materiality.” The Deleuzian text moves “beyond existing intellectual and pragmatic frameworks” (126-27). Simply put, Derrida operates within striated, state space defined by lack of presence (of the speaker, of foundational meaning, of corporeality) and the inability to access anything outside the “supplement” of writing,³ while Deleuze operates in the smooth, open space of partial presences that connect with and create multiple new becomings outside any system.

Contrary to Grosz’s equation between Derrida’s always lacking supplement and controlled state space, Lynette Hunter argues that the difference between language as partial or inadequate reflects a difference between conceptions of state order. The relationship between unarticulated desire and articulated knowledge “depends on a notion of linguistic adequacy. . . . A desirable object becomes known by being commodified, fully represented. The pleasure of such commodifying practice reinforces the sense that people live in an ordered, rational world of stable representation” (131). The failure of language to represent that order (as for Lacan) “is taken as inadequacy, a failure, something to drive desire” (135). Conversely, the idea of language as partial suggests “all

³Kelly Oliver’s argument that much of Derrida’s writing (especially *Spurs*) operates in a phallogocentric system of Lacanian “méconnaissance” supports Grosz’s distinction between the two theories. Oliver argues that, in taking on the figure of woman as the masquerade of truth and nontruth, Derrida poses as the figure that “creates the illusion of presence or being” that is simultaneously “absence or castration” (76). Oliver admits that Derrida overtly argues against a theory of lack, since he rejects Lacan’s “negative theology which makes absence central” and attempts to “escape the Lacanian transcendental signifier by constantly changing metaphors for the process of metaphor: *différance*, supplement, pharmakon, hymen, etc.” Yet, she insists, he does not destabilize lack as an originary premise: Derrida’s emphasis that these metaphors “are interchangeable places them within the economy of castration. . . . Within the psychic economy that Lacan describes, the logic of castration is based on substitution” (77).

order is necessarily socially questionable and negotiable: . . . unarticulated knowledge [is] that which resists commodification to the extent that it cannot be systematized” (136).

Hunter argues that Derrida’s notions of the fold, erasure, *différance*, and supplementarity evince, not lack and inadequacy, but the partiality of language that enables desiring production without closure. Because “il n’y a pas de hors-texte,” Derrida pushes toward what cannot be categorically contained within its own system. This undecidability that he inscribes into state space leads to the incommensurable conclusions of Grosz and Hunter. A similar deconstructive undecidability between categorical terms and their impossibility develops in the writing of and on bodies in the novels of Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand. Deleuze and Guattari describe such undecidable connection as the deterritorializing invasion of nomadic space (smooth space) into state space (striated space) and vice versa. In the novels, the categorical presence of the body must be evacuated to demolish the sexist and racist codings of black and female bodies as primitive nature and the unspeakable that is repressed and sublated by the law-of-the-father, the super-ego, and the state. But without the molecular and contingent differences of local, particular, territorial locations that are also part of categorical description, lesbian and female bodies disappear. The assassination of Angela’s body and embodied language in Brossard’s *Le désert mauve* qualifies the poststructuralist science of L’homme long, which eradicates a vital corporeality along with the originary subject, with particularly misogynist and homophobic over-tones that do not deregulate systemic control.

Such eradication of corporeality in language is not a given in all poststructuralist thought. Deleuze and Guattari argue that Derrida’s evacuation of corporeality enacts an

imperialist reterritorialization of the abstract drift of language. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari accept Derrida's premise that "every language presupposes a writing system from which it originates" rather than a pre-linguistic origin. They also agree that written language (*graphē*) substitutes "for the voice (supplementarity)." However, they argue that voice and writing must remain "heterogenous elements" that act on each other (202-03). Writing displaces and deterritorializes bodies, yet the orality of bodies territorializes language. Language and bodies continually inscribe each other so that there is no "full body" of "natural" existence, nor is there an erasure of the physical.⁴ "Territorial representation," the sense of language that Deleuze and Guattari espouse, displaces the nature/civilization, body/language split by occupying the intersubjective space between the oppositions. Derrida's system falls into their definition of "imperial representation": a grapho-centrism in which the voice becomes subordinate to a displaced writing that becomes a constant "apparatus of psychic repression" (203). The Derridean double displacement of metaphor (a metaphor that is taken as origin and then seen to be displaced by the metaphorical nature of language) allows for nothing outside the displacement of writing and completely supplants the partial embodiment of language in voice.

⁴Deleuze and Guattari argue that bodies and language enact a violence on each other that cuts through full presence and inscribes the one in the other. I avoid the violence of this inscription by following Irigaray's feminist ethics of the "divine" creation of something new that is neither original in the meeting between incommensurable parts. While Irigaray writes this difference into gender, I write it into the rhizomatic connection, difference, and derailment that occur in an intersubjective meeting between such concepts as corporeality and language, racial and geographical differences, lesbianism and motherhood.

In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that language deterritorializes the territorial orality of the mouth (as a sensory organ) and reterritorializes it with “Sense” (19-20). Evoking the territoriality of the mouth, speaking without the colonization of sound by meaning, Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand deploy what Deleuze and Guattari call the war machine of a minor literature. They create linguistic excesses that over-determine meaning, in the interpretive contexts of the majority language, and a poverty of language that undermines the ability of language to be representational (*Kafka* 19). Such “territorial representation” brings bodily elements into language. A territorial corporeality enables Brand to criticize the racist and sexist scarring of bodies through disciplinary pain that makes the subject conform to imperialist inscriptions. It enables her to inscribe contingent markers of race, sex, and sexuality that embody the voice differently in Elizete’s demotic Caribbean and Verlia’s version of ‘standard’ English. A local naming of places and objects deploys a territorial mapping of sounds that create lines of escape from the colonization of place as an object of an imperialist, linguistic, and political mapping. Elizete’s demotic Caribbean and Verlia’s corporeal signing of revolutionary thought become ways of marking the local and particular that change in contextual location but cannot be erased and reterritorialized if a nonfoundational coalition politics is to exist. The partial presences of bodies and writing cross each other in Marlatt’s focus on the emergent meanings in the liminal state between sleep and wakefulness that comes to represent the place of hybridity itself: the hybridity of colonial culture, the hybridity of bodies and language, the hybridity of lesbian desire with maternal narratives, the hybridity of bodies and spirits. Marlatt writes, “. . . all my

stories turn in this transition hour just before dawn, when light begins to intimate the differences between things still rooted deep in earth's shadow" (129-39). These meanings remain at the level of emergence, the level of the "unresolved and ongoing" (25), rather than the colonized and commodified. The horizontal and rapid connections between elements, the "jumping" between things in a territorial language (*Anti-Oedipus* 204), is essential to Brossard's strategy of writing the movement of indescribable being and desiring.

Corporeal sense derails the linguistic organization of sense. Orality causes language to cross between different languages by making connections between the materials of sound and the materials of intertexts without fidelity to conceptual location or meaning. Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand inscribe intensive interactions between language, corporeality, history, geography, literature, orature, and mythology that change each categorical term as it touches another in the creation of something between the particulars. This enacts Deleuze and Guattari's theory of "territorial representation" that allows bodies into language without containing and defining corporeality as completely "natural" or substantially solid.⁵ Such insubstantial corporeality opens into places of

⁵Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the changes in the material of iron in making a sword provide an example of a corporeality that is neither pure substance nor pure form. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they argue that iron ore is refined, then moulded into the shape of a sword. While the form is in place, the process is still not finished, since the sword is then hardened in water. They write,

This corporeality has two characteristics: on the one hand, it is inseparable from passages to the limit as changes of state, from processes of deformation or transformation . . . that act in the manner of events . . . ; on the other hand, it is inseparable from expressive or intensive qualities, which can be higher or lower in degree, and are produced in the manner of variable affects (resistance, hardness,

becoming that are outside of and excluded from Derrida's disembodied graphism.

While the concepts of embodied language, nomadism, rhizomatics, the body without organs, and the war machine in the theory of Deleuze and Guattari are integral components in my proposal of a desiring intersubjectivity in postmodern Canadian and Québécoise lesbian writing, their masculinism poses problems. Feminist deconstructive theory has equally accused Derrida's figure of the 'woman' who stands for the truth of untruth and Deleuze and Guattari's figure of "becoming-woman" with metaphorical abstraction and appropriation of the term *woman*. The abstraction erases the material and historical conditions that form the basis for anti-sexist action against the state that organizes systemic regulation. Feminist critics such as Kelly Oliver and Elizabeth Grosz have argued that the metaphorical figure of 'woman' stands in to represent the poststructuralist philosopher's quest and speculation on the impossibility of substantial truth. The metaphorical disembodiment of women into an abstraction that becomes the truth of untruth erases women's corporeality and political struggle against specific material conditions that give rise to the differences between the speaker (subject) and the spoken (object) that enable such emergent lines of philosophic flight. Such unquestioning reduction and appropriation of the figure of 'woman' erases the heterogenous, molecular materials of women's local and contingent strategies and realities that have the potential

weight, color . . .). There is thus an ambulant coupling, *events-affects*, which constitutes the vague corporeal essence and is distinct from the sedentary linkage, "fixed essence-properties of the thing deriving from the essence."

It is also distinct from "imposing form upon matter" since the material traits create differences and constitute "affects" (407-08).

to short-circuit a masculinist reterritorialization of philosophy. Such masculinist philosophy gains the authority to prioritize the relevant issues and terms of discussion⁶ by posing as neutral quantum bodies without sex or gender, which becomes the pinnacle of destabilized achievement. Deleuze and Guattari, for example, discuss the “molar” organization of feminism (*Thousand Plateaus* 276), yet the sex of the masculine theorists and writers they analyze disappears without commentary. The novels I analyze enact an affirmative deconstruction that brings the masculinist systems espoused by Derrida, Deleuze, and Guattari to a crisis that shows the limits of each for an embodied lesbian writing, while simultaneously working within their paradigms. The Derridean trace returns elliptically in the novels of Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand with its (im)possible difference of bodily forces that are excluded from Derridean graphism. The movement between corporeality and language inscribes sense that does not submit to the law-of-the-father but also resists the terms of Deleuze and Guattari. “Becoming-woman” for these lesbian writers often means gendered regulation and is something to be questioned rather

⁶See Gayatri Spivak’s comment, in relation to the term “hymen,” that one must “learn from Derrida’s critique of phallogocentrism, but must go elsewhere” (*Postcolonial Critic* 13). Kelly Oliver comments that the metaphorizing “language body” in Derrida and Nietzsche replaces the mother “as a desiring, speaking subject, to whom we are indebted for life” (161). Rosi Braidotti argues in relation to Deleuze’s theory of “becoming-woman” that leads to “becoming-imperceptible”: “. . . only a nonwoman would contemplate this possibility as a great novelty, an unprecedented event, or a catastrophe internal to the philosophical order and capable of subverting it. . . . Deleuze’s theory of becoming is obviously determined by his location as an embodied male subject for whom the dissolution of identities based on the phallus results in by-passing gender altogether, toward a multiple sexuality” (*Nomadic Subjects* 122-23). Elizabeth Grosz argues that Deleuze’s “‘becoming woman’ is a male appropriation of women’s politics, struggles, theories, knowledges, insofar as it ‘borrows’ from them while depoliticizing their radicality” (*Volatile Bodies* 163).

than uncritically embraced.

Intersubjectivity: The Challenge of Feminist Ethics to the ‘Other’ of Language and Self/Other Relations

Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand deploy a certain conceptual and verbal violence in their writing against the violence of racism, sexism, homophobia, and subject/object regulation. Their attacks on systemic violence spin out rhizomatic filaments that intersect the theories of Irigaray, Derrida, and Deleuze and Guattari without the fidelity of embracing the whole of any one theoretical location. Further, these theorists disagree on the issue of violence in writing and subjectivity. Irigaray’s feminist ethics espouses a nonviolent, non-Hegelian loving connection between differences. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the violent intercutting of corporeality and language enacts a war machine that enables the desedimentation of regulated thought. In “Force of Law,” Derrida argues for a force that does not necessarily presume the violence that registers as the linguistic act itself in *Of Grammatology*. Each of these positions are strategically necessary to hollow out the violent constitution of the subject through the deformation of a colonizing language and enable a non-Hegelian intersubjectivity.

In Brossard’s *Le désert mauve*, the character Mélanie and the fictional translator Maude Laures criticize and refuse to live by the Hegelian opposition between self and other that appropriates the other’s difference with a familiarity of oppositional self

naming: *je/tu*. The last words of Angstelle's 'original' text, "Je ne peux tutoyer personne" (51), are repeated exactly as the last words in Laures's 'translation' (220) emphasizing the irrevocable agreement between two lesbian writers that otherwise speak very different languages and philosophies. Further, Maude Laures examines and avoids the murderous violence of the familiar "call to the other" in her translation of another lesbian's writing. The familiar "call to the other" is what Derrida argues pushes knowledge beyond the already known and already said. Laures's refusal of the familiar "call to the other" connects with Irigaray's theory of a double-lipped meeting between differences that do not reterritorialize the other into the self-same, a meeting without familiarity. This theory of "the double pole of attraction and support, which excludes disintegration or rejection, attraction and decomposition, but which instead ensures the separation that articulates every encounter and makes possible speech, promises, alliances" (*Ethics of Sexual Difference* 9) inscribes potential for change in proximity rather than in the familiarity of the other. The only 'other' in Brossard's novel is criticized as Hegelian opposition that eradicates, captures, or possesses.⁷

⁷There are problems with Irigaray's theory that should not simply be overlooked. In *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* Irigaray argues that, in order to make ethical judgements, ethics requires a reduction of the social to a singular universal. Because sexual difference prohibits that reduction, Irigaray proposes a double universal singular of incommensurable sexual difference. Similar to Deleuze and Guattari's postulation of the open equation of the rhizomatic "+ y + z + a + . . ." (Massumi, *Thousand Plateaus*, xiii), Irigaray's theory of sexual difference refuses the identification of male and female as x/not x and replaces it with + x + y. Oliver extrapolates Irigaray's argument into a new feminist ethics that is more inclusive than Irigaray's heterosexist, Eurocentric system, but upholds the theoretical basis, by arguing for an ethics of responsibility to difference where desire is created in "an encounter between two different people" (171), presumably inclusive of differences that not only include race and sexuality but differences exposed

Laures and Angstelle enact Irigaray's loving ethics of proximate difference by releasing the controlling gaze of the subject in order to write in the space between an oppositional self/other that resists excluding or reducing the one to a reflection of the other. Yet, a certain gaze, a violence against violence, or war machine against misogyny and homophobia, must be held strategically to avoid blindness. Laures insists that the gaze be held ("Avant tout, soutenir le regard" [147]) in order to support Angstelle's inclusion of L'homme long as a figuration of masculinist violence that one must continually guard against. A strategic gaze of opposition to L'homme long — who is both a nuclear physicist who destroys landscape and a deconstructionist who separates and denies corporeal presence in language⁸ — is necessary to demolish his oppositional

in the deconstruction of such categories as well. Further, Irigaray's call for "a *sensible transcendental*" of the god conjured within our "blood" and "flesh" (129) and her emphasis on Christianity places the desiring-production between differences in an unknowable theological foundation that is deconstructed in Brossard's text and is destabilized in a hybridity that cannot maintain authority in Brand's and Marlatt's texts.

⁸L'homme long is a figure of the disembodied deconstruction that violates any sense of the 'real' outside of language, a figure of Roland Barthes and Derrida. He sets the nuclear bomb that explodes the landscape of the desert and kills Angela (the figure of a female embodied language and science) with his gaze. He graphically performs within "les limites du possible" (41) / "the limits of the possible" (de Lotbinière-Harwood 37) rather than reaching toward the impossible in translation between bodies and languages. Roland Barthes's "Death of the Author" resonates in L'homme long's phrase "*I/am/become/Death*" — maintenant nous sommes tous des fils de chiennes" (17). He becomes so abstracted and seemingly neutral in his performance as an effect of social inscription that he does not acknowledge his agency in violating Angela: "L'hom'oblong regarde devant lui, complètement détaché de la scène" (220) / "O'blongman stares straight ahead, completely detached from the scene" (de Lotbinière-Harwood 202). Nor does he acknowledge his own masculinist embodiment: "L'hom'oblong entend l'explosion. Tout son corps se raidit, forme crispée. Son feutre est tombé, mou. Il allume une cigarette" (193) / "O'blongman hears the explosion. His whole body tenses, stiff shape. His felt hat has fallen, limp. He lights a cigarette" (de Lotbinière-Harwood 177).

Hegelian violence that erases incommensurable elements outside the already known and said. Neither Laures nor Angstelle can avoid warring confrontation with the gaze of L'homme long that kills Angela because she evokes a female embodiment of language, desire, and reality outside his patriarchal system. In order to rewrite deconstruction from a nonfoundational, embodied, lesbian perspective, a certain violence of Brossardian "délire" (delirium and unreading) acts against the violence of subject formation and the oppositional gaze of the self who familiarizes the other. This strategic opposition against violence pervades each of the novels and opens a space for intersubjectivity in which "Le regard fond" / "The gaze melts" (*Le désert mauve* 11).

While desedimenting the structures of language and philosophy requires the violence of a war machine that attacks organization, a nonfoundational politics of intersubjectivity requires connection that is not antagonistic. Maude Laures's translation of Laure Angstelle's text enacts a loving dynamics that resists the violent opposition of differences and resonates with Irigaray's feminist ethics. Maude Laures's language inscribes a different philosophy from Laure Angstelle. Angstelle speaks a Derridean/Lacanian language, while Laures speaks a Deleuzian language. The homo-linguistic translation between the philosophic differences of territorial languages reveals a female embodiment that negotiates differently with different languages without the desire to supersede or unwrite the other. By maintaining these differences, Brossard supports Irigaray's negotiation of a non-Hegelian loving connection between differences that remain specific to each embodiment. Such specificity of difference is necessary for a nonfoundational coalition politics. In *Body, Inc.*, Pamela Banting calls such negotiation

an “interlanguage”: a translation of what has been unspeakable and culturally untranslatable. In Brossard’s negotiation between the source language and the target language, between the languages of Angstelle and Laures, a nonfoundational and mobile lesbian intersubject becomes speakable. Because such translation between two languages and between corporeality and language resists closure and exclusion, neither Angstelle’s nor Laures’s texts can be privileged. A resolution in a single target language would stop the nonfoundational act of intersubjective negotiation.

In *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Irigaray describes non-Hegelian intersubjective and linguistic relations as the double lips of the feminine that evade the Hegelian grammar of subject/object and self/other. Two subjects touch and become something else without appropriation. The proprietary borders of ownership that define the essence of the true subject disappear, as does a Hegelian consummation of the other as a mirror reflection of the self⁹: “Neither one nor two. I’ve never known how to count. Up to you” (207). Two lips speak together and create something other than either original in a “limitless” passage between “inside” and “outside” (210), sameness and difference, corporeality and language. Even though Irigaray’s theory has been appropriated for lesbian writing, she figures the relations of women’s “homo-sexuality” as an “autoeroticism” that would create “a new prison” of “sameness” by “revers[ing] the order.” Responding to the potential but evading the innate homophobia in Irigaray’s figuration of a between-women

⁹See my footnote explaining *appropriation* and *propre* in the subsection of “Rhizomatic Connections” entitled “The Feminist and Queer Theory of Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler.”

desire that can only be temporary “tactical strikes” (33), literary critics such as Marilyn Farwell have investigated the narratological difference of subject/object relations in lesbian writing. In her examination of lesbian feminist and postmodern queer theory in *Heterosexual Plots and Lesbian Narratives*, Farwell discusses the “lyrical erotics” of Irigaray’s “When Our Lips Speak Together” but modifies the sameness of an autoerotic with the “Self and Other/self” that Penelope Engelbrecht argues displaces both sameness and the oppositional self/other in lesbian writing. Farwell argues that lesbian narrative intervenes in the gendered coding of narrative with a double movement of active and passive positions in the sameness and difference of the shifting subjects of the lover and the beloved and the narrator and the narratee. Yet Farwell and Engelbrecht continue to rely on subject positions. The lesbian intersubjects in the novels I examine engage Irigaray’s dismissal of Hegelian appropriation through a new ethics of touch that does not erect the identity of a subject or an object of desire: “Nearness so pronounced that it makes all discrimination of identity, and thus all forms of property, impossible . . . [in a] ceaseless exchange of herself with the other without any possibility of identifying either” (*This Sex* 31). However, Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand resist the homophobia that Irigaray inscribes in the autoerotic sameness of lesbian relations by creating desiring intersubjects that are the intersections of differences yet still circulate without the appropriation and appropriation established even by a shifting subject/object binary that persists in the lesbian narrative theory of Farwell and Engelbrecht.

Farwell’s theory is not about sameness. She writes, “Each construction of the lesbian subject . . . oscillates between sameness and differences, utopian essentialism and

deconstructive nonessentialism, and woman and not-woman” (68). Yet these novels expand the idea of “sameness and differences” beyond the normative narrative gendering of women (Farwell 78) into an investigation of the various signs that inscribe women. A series of reciprocal exchanges enable a nonfoundational deconstruction and connection (not sexual identity) between the many already split and partial bodies of corporeality, language, gender, race, history, philosophy, literature, geography, economy, nation, and politics that inhabit the lovers, the writer, and the reader and provoke a lesbian “desiring writing” as the continual production of difference. Such a desiring intersubjectivity between the characters and in the reading/writing event is not an investigation of identity, subject, or representational meaning. Rhizomatic intersubjects interrupt each other, derail the original partial subject of meaning, and take off into something partially inscribed but not defined by the original lines.

Farwell discusses an alteration between sameness and difference in a lesbian relation to normative gender but continues to inscribe sameness in lesbian relations. She asserts, “The reality that two women create depends on sameness — their positioning toward one another — and differences — other positionalities for creating meaning” (91-92). But what Farwell calls “other positionalities” inscribe the positioning of one woman in relation to another as part of lesbian intersubjectivity in the novels that I examine. Subjective differences in these novels are not the function of separate categories but are the intersubjective and partial inscriptions of women that can meet and strengthen each other. Strength increases with the recognition of incontrovertible difference between lesbians that can enable a nonfoundational politics to continue to speak of lesbian

struggle or desire without categorical enclosure and exclusion. Marlatt's *Taken* examines a hybrid space of difference within the same of between-women desire that brings the mothers, lovers, and theoretical locations together and drive them apart as figures and grounds, languages and bodies, Wests and Easts intersect to inscribe a noncategorical space of lesbian desiring production. In Brossard's *Le désert mauve*, the two fictional texts inscribe a lesbian interlanguage in the intersubjective movement between the abstract unspeakable that is the impossible outside in Angelle's Derridean/Lacanian language and the shifting, concrete metamorphoses of becoming-animal that is outside systemic organization in Laures's Deleuzian language. The quantum energy in the molecular dialectics of Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* reveals the attraction of difference between the concrete materialism of Elizete and the abstract theory of Verlia that enacts a lesbian revolutionary energy in the mobile space between.

An intersubject arises in the fluid interactions of partial components that become what Derrida identifies in "Force and Law" as the constitutive force that allows things to be named and identified, rather than the excessive violence that inscribes the subject as the object of a fascist state's regulation. No matter how often they shift positions, subject/object relations still rely on the violence of Hegelian appropriation, or becoming *propre* (the pure essence of what belongs to and is owned by the subject).¹⁰ Shifting subject/object relations assume an original wholeness of truth that is violently cut

¹⁰See my note explaining Hegelian appropriation in the subsection of "Rhizomatic Connections" entitled "The Feminist and Queer Theory of Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler."

through, inscribing a sadomasochistic erotics. Farwell's description of the shifting subject/object relations that change lesbian narratology draws on Elizabeth Meese's *(SEM)erotics*. Meese writes:

My task is to convert you and me to us. You are you. I want you to be separate so that I can feel the thrill of taking (you) over, composing you / me / mine / ours. For a moment I construct you/me: inseparable, just as I write the word "us" or we — a rewriting of you/me. . . . I orchestrate and perform my desire on your smooth skin, I play the fuck master and take you (in). (95-96)

The performance of the subject's desires on the object requires an original distinction and separation of the subject that is cut through as it is inscribed as an object of desire by a gazing, speaking, and controlling subject. An intersubject, however, is composed of partial presences that have no originary fullness. Rather than a controlling subject, an intersubject is an effect of language and the enormous outside of all systems that is neither controlled nor known in advance. Rather than being violently cut through by the other, an intersubject comes into being in the space between. Kelly Oliver insists that an ethics of intersubjectivity would differentiate Hegel's assertion of an intersubjective model of subjectivity that "begins from the desire to consume the other" in "the violent struggle with another self-consciousness in the lordship/bondage stage" from an intersubjectivity that is "a desire for exchange that benefits both parties" (195). Hegel's intersubjectivity rises out of "a necessarily hostile desire to annihilate the other" (Oliver 195), a subjectivity of self/other opposition, rather than ". . . something beyond either of us that makes the end of discourse impossible even as it makes discourse possible"

(Oliver 199).

Oliver's intersubjective ethics draws strongly on *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, in which Irigaray argues for the return of the divine, "parousia," or immanence, not as a transcendental utopia of the always unknowable but as "a realization — here and now — in and through the body" (148), a persistence of corporeality in the voice of language, a sense of "festival, grace, love, thought" (140). Irigaray figures this life-affirming "third era" of "the spirit and the bride" (148) that follows the Father of the Old Testament and the Son of the New Testament as the meeting between gender difference "with no murders" (149).¹¹ As differences touch without violent exclusion, an "intermediary" space opens that is "Neither the one nor the other. Which is not to say neutral or neuter" (82). Spirit, Irigaray argues, has never had an "incarnation . . . except, prophetically, at Pentecost. The spirit appears as the third term. The term of alliance, of mediation? By fire?" (148). While the lesbian texts I address leave the heterosexual bent of Irigaray's figuration aside, Brossard's text deploys Pentecostal allusions to create a feminine embodiment of language without fidelity to systemic religious or literary sources; Marlatt

¹¹Susan McGahan argues that Brossard's *Le désert mauve* can be read as a feminist detective novel that disrupts conventions of genre by opening a cleavage between the signifier and the signified that produces "a multiplicity of possible interpretations" (109). While McGahan concludes that Maude Laures's translation "reasserts women's power to reposition the body in language" (114), she insists that the mystery of who/what killed Angela "is unsolvable" and "absurdly displaced" in the fictional confrontation of Laures who becomes Angela with Laure Angstelle (112). Yet that scene is not at all absurdly displaced since it identifies the antagonistic opposition between "I" and a familiar "you" as the source of murder that pervades Western phallogocentrism in the binary separation of body and language, self and other, male and female, that enacts a Hegelian exclusion of difference.

examines the invisible spirit that can only be seen in the drift of bodies and language; and Brand charges the quantum space of energy with a fiery “grace.” Irigaray’s religiously influenced metaphor of the meeting between corporeality and abstraction in the figure of the spirit becomes the postmodern space of the ghost for these writers. With an intensity of desiring connection, the novels haunt a ghostly space that is both the specific figuration of local conditions, issues, and bodies and the abstract drift between the contradictions of female bodies and signs/sites of inscription that establish a nonfoundational lesbian politics.

By naming the specific, molecular bodies of language, corporeality, nation, race, gender, and literature that between-women desire negotiates with the productive energy of quantum instability, the authors strategically take the Derridean risk of violence that is not necessarily violence. Instead, they risk a strategic essentialism of catachrestic nominalism that detours, defers, and differs from itself. The risk must be taken to keep lesbian bodies alive in language and in thought. Maude Laures, the fictional translator in Brossard’s novel, finds Laure Angstelle’s book in a seemingly obscure second-hand book store and translates her outdated Lacanianism into a Deleuzian language that keeps the shared desire for an embodied lesbian language *au courant*. While the lesbian embodiment of Angstelle’s feminist Lacanianism appears in what cannot be spoken and Laures’s lesbian Deleuzian embodiment of language appears in a mobile *concrétude* that may suggest a greater meeting between the material and the abstract, that is not the point. Both inscribe a lesbian embodiment of language and thought in the negotiations they enact with the prevailing theory of their times. Brossard inscribes a lesbian desiring

intersubjectivity as the ghostly space that emerges between the two very different locations. Everything is at stake in such negotiation, as Laures insists: “L’univers était un risque” (55) / “The universe was a risk” (de Lotbinière-Harwood 51). Like Suzanne who translates her mother(s) in Marlatt’s *Taken* and Elizete who translates Verlia’s abstract political theory into poetic materiality and nonlinear grammar in Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here*, Laures’s translation of Angstelle involves a necessary risk of violence in the force of a meeting between differences that inscribes something else.

The discursive positioning of these texts also risks violence in the force that inscribes a becoming lesbian of the reader’s emotional relation with the sites of desiring production between women. As Elizabeth Grosz argues, “discursive positioning” is “a complex relation between the corporeality of the author, that is, the author’s textual residues or traces, the text’s materiality, and its effects in marking the bodies of the author and readers, and the corporeality and productivity of its readers” (*Space, Time, Perversion* 18). This means that a lesbian text is not necessarily written by a lesbian, composed of lesbian characters, and read by an implied audience of lesbians. As we concluded in the Lesbian Writing and Publishing Collective at Women’s Press, somehow a text becomes lesbian, but the firm location of a lesbian desiring production in the reading/writing relations of a text is extremely difficult. What constitutes important issues for lesbians changes with the embodiment of different socio-cultural relations. A lesbian Caribbean mother may be more worried about her son’s potential murder by Toronto police or his overdose with drugs than concerned about accessibility to the mostly Caucasian sperm in a sperm bank. Further, readers of various genders, sexual

orientations, and various bodies become lesbian by engaging without resistance in a reading of a text that inscribes between-women desire, which implies (without demand) the creation of a nonreferential lesbian reader in the temporary location of the reading act. Even as an Anglo-Celtic lesbian reader, engaging with the Rastafarian and revolutionary materials, histories, and narratives in Brand's text brings me into an intersubjective becoming of desiring lesbian dread; the French and European sources and materials in Brossard's text inscribe an intersubjective becoming lesbienne; and the multiple Easts and Wests in Marlatt's text produces an intersubjective lesbian hybridity. These acts of lesbian becoming not only change the temporary inscription of the reader but have a long-term effect that can change the real by altering the reader's intertextual constitutive elements.

The risk of the reader's interpretive violence also pervades such discursive positioning in which no two readings can ever be the same, since they depend on contextual location. In my reading of becoming lesbian dread, for example, I must learn another cultural history, language, geography, and location by consulting material by diasporic Caribbean writers in order to try to avoid appropriation and objectification. But my contextual knowledge will still be different from someone who has been immersed in the corporeal-linguistic experience of that life from birth: 'different' but not necessarily 'inadequate' or appropriating, although that violence is always a risk. The discursive positioning of the materials in the text that provide traces of the author's historical, geographical, racial, sexual, economic, and social position constitute the reader as well. As Jonathan Culler notes, ". . . Barthes's celebrations of the reader as producer of the text

are matched by accounts of the text's disruption of the reader's most basic conceptions" (70). Further, Culler argues, ". . . the more active, projective, or creative the reader is, the more she is manipulated by the sentence or by the author" (71). To engage with the text in the affective production of sense generates a force that risks violence in the constitution of an intersubject. This intersubject is not a violent Hegelian overtaking of the other, of the author's intent by the reader or vice versa, but an intersection between the author and reader that produces something other than either alone.

The Derridean sense of "force" that enables speech and knowledge but is not the violent, Hegelian overtaking of the other also appears in these novels as an intersubject that arises in the traces of corporeality in language. By combining the theories of Irigaray and Kristeva, Oliver convincingly argues that linguistic production is composed of partial multiplicities that are not completely or violently separated from bodies or maternal origins. The mother can only love because she is a speaking subject with a relation to the third term of social interaction. She is a desiring intersubject, not just the object of desire. Oliver argues that this establishes the mother as "the knot between nature and culture . . . [that] problematizes that very distinction by straddling the two" (Oliver 173-74). Marlatt investigates bodies as sites of social relation and a reciprocity of difference in communication. She examines the intersubjective hybridity between bodies and languages as well as an intersubjectivity between bodies that are not pre-linguistic or separated from language but social bodies that signify in a different sign system. Marlatt's characterization of Suzanne's mother in the fold between nature and civilization is not a fold between a subject whose agency for change derives from a pre-linguistic

knowledge of her essential nature but a fold between the enormous outsides of nature and language, neither of which she can control. In addition to Oliver's psychoanalytic and philosophic argument, Robert J.C. Young's postcolonial description of *culture* as the third term that folds between nature and civilization (42) brings together a multiplicity of bodies and languages and enables my discussion to move beyond a reduction of embodied language and intersubjectivity to the biological mother. Marlatt's investigation of social bodies inscribes a nonbiological and cultural mothering of language and social relations in Suzanne's relation to her *amah*, her colonial other-mother.

On one hand, Kristeva's semiotic *chora* of bodily influence in language that connects maternal and female (social) bodies could be productive for a lesbian interlanguage, but, on the other, it poses major problems for a poststructuralist theory of lesbian writing. A biological subject of intent depends on originary drives that contradict poststructuralist principles. Further, Kristeva's theory of a "maternal homosexuality" inscribes an absence of eroticism that eradicates the meaning of lesbianism itself. Not only does Kristeva "imagine lesbian loves . . . [in an] 'arena of neutralized, filtered libido, devoid of the erotic cutting edge of masculine sexuality,'" as Oliver criticizes, quoting from *Tales of Love* (178), but she also argues that the relation between the child and the mother that forms the model for lesbianism is a pre-individuated fluid connection of "psychosis" that resists "the social, symbolic bond" (*Desire in Language* 239). Oliver addresses the problem of asexual and asocial relations by reading Irigaray's theory of the mother as an erotic female desiring subject into the maternal theory of Kristeva, thus, radicalizing Kristeva's position that "feminine sexuality is primarily a homosexual

sexuality — the girl’s first love is her mother . . .” (Oliver 177). Kristeva’s theory of a pre-Oedipal *chora* means that she must describe lesbian love with nonerotic, asocial attributes. However, Deleuze and Guattari argue that Oedipal subjectivity is not necessary for desire. Although their figuration of the schizophrenic is extreme, their schizo-analysis establishes the decoding potential of desiring production that is not controlled by ego regulation. The body without organs is an anti-Oedipal intersubject that produces social relations. Working between the positions of Kristeva, Oliver, Irigaray, and Deleuze and Guattari, I argue that an intersubjective lesbian eroticism that is not “primal regression” to a pre-Oedipal phase (Kristeva, *Desire* 239) but a productive relation between similarities and differences in a lesbian and social body without organs can be seen in each of the novels. Marlatt’s *Taken* dives into the fluid connections between hybrid daughters and mothers that form lesbian desiring intersubjectivities and languages. Brossard’s *Le désert mauve* haunts and is haunted by the intertextual mothers of previous inscription and the speaking, desiring, lesbian mothers pregnant with bodies, names, and inventions. Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here* relies on a maternal genealogy of forgetting the binary inscription of the *propre* that relegates Elizete to the unspeaking primitive side of a pre-Oedipal nature. The anti-Oedipal genealogy of forgetting inscribes an intersubjectivity between bodies and languages that cannot be colonized by Western sublimation. Deconstructing the psychoanalytic split between corporeality and language, each novel resists Kristeva’s location of libidinal force in a pre-linguistic *chora* of nostalgic desire for a pre-Oedipal unity that struggles against the objectified displacement of language. Origins in these novels are always partial and connected to language. Brossard’s novel

examines fictional origins; Marlatt's investigates the hybridity and difference in social bodies; Brand's negates original unity as an abduction and violent enslavement in the Caribbean.

The issues raised by a desiring intersubjectivity in the ficto-poetics of the postmodern lesbian novels I examine steer me toward all of the above deconstructive, poststructuralist, postcolonial, and feminist theoretical sources that examine the relation of bodies and languages in the development of a speaking subject. Yet the lesbian, postcolonial intersubjects that arise in Brossard's, Marlatt's, and Brand's lesbian "desiring writing" reveal the heterosexual or patriarchal limits of established poststructuralist theory. The rhizomatic differences of these lesbian Canadian and Québécoise deconstructions also reveal the impossibility of establishing a unified lesbian poststructuralism. However, such impossibility does not resolve in destructive closure. By employing an affirmative deconstruction, I join a rhizomatic chorus of "transgression" (Holbrook) and trans-(e)lation between positions to create a mobile, desiring theory of nonfoundational lesbian intersubjectivity.

Chapter 4. Canadian and Québécoise Affirmative Deconstruction

The connection of lesbian and feminist Canadian postmodernism with Québécoise modernité¹ distinguishes it from a broader postmodern deconstruction in Canada (and the United States). The genealogy of this intertwined deconstruction ‘begins’ with Brossard and Marlatt and their eventual collaboration. Brossard emerges from a milieu of French and Québécois poststructuralist theory, French, Québécoise, and American feminist theory, and European and Québécois literature. Marlatt emerges from a British, American, Canadian, and French literary and theoretical background with feminist and experimental interests. While these diverse sources may appear only to touch fields so large (French and American writing and feminist theory) that it would be difficult to argue that they form rhizomatic points for connection, the feminist collaborative work of the 1980s and early 1990s destabilizes the institutionalized critical tradition of two solitudes in Canadian and Québécois writing. The intersection of Canadian and Québécoises lesbian and feminist writers and theorists develops an affirmative

¹*Modernité* is the term that in French writing describes the intersection of poststructuralist theories with the politics of fiction. In English, this sense is represented by the term *postmodernism*. There are many postmodernisms that enact very different strategies in the dislocation of the sign from any metaphysical meaning prior to language and to the dissolution of the subject into an effect of discursive construction. However, the type of postmodernism that I am describing here is an affirmative deconstruction. As I explain in my opening section, the *pétits récits* that reduce all thought to fictional constructions of reality, fictions that matter and help us make sense of the world, function as positive partial presences that collide, change each other, and make desiring intersubjects. Rather than a negative interpretation of the death of the subject and author that potentially leads to political stagnation in contradictory positions that cancel each other, these affirmative presences create a mobile subjectivity that is always in the process of creating and becoming something new.

deconstruction that enables me to push this productive destabilization of subjects and objects into a theory of poststructuralist intersubjectivity.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, lesbian and feminist alliances between Canadian and Québécoises writers and critics developed networks in conferences (Women and Words in 1983, Dialogue in 1981), editorial collectives, and bilingual publications such as *Tessera* and *Atlantis* that cross national divides. Readerly networks have also contaminated the division of separate solitudes through lesbian creative and critical anthologies such as Betsy Warland's *InVersions: Writings by Dykes, Queers and Lesbians* (1991). American collections such as Susan J. Wolfe and Julia Penelope's *Sexual Practice, Textual Theory: Lesbian Cultural Criticism* (1993) or Karla Jay and Joanne Glasgow's *Lesbian Texts and Contexts: Radical Revisions* (1990), both of which include essays on Brossard, also contaminate the separation of French and English writing and theory. Even though Québécois writers have insisted that the market dynamics of publishing mean that translation occurs mostly from French to English, which unbalances the network, such translations as those generated by the now defunct Coach House Quebec Translation series and the translation manuscript group at Women's Press have contributed to the destabilization of the idea of separate national traditions. American-published critical analysis in English on Québécoises writers, such as Paula Gilbert Lewis's *Traditionalism, Nationalism and Feminism: Women Writers of Quebec* (1985) or Karen Gould's *Writing in the Feminine: Feminism and Experimental Writing in Quebec* (1990), have become important earlier sources for Canadian study of feminist writers in Québec. The huge impact of Québécoises writers such as Jovette Marchessault.

Nicole Brossard, and Louky Bersianik on lesbian and feminist experimental ficto-theory in Canada in the 1980s developed rhizomatic connections in the field of lesbian and feminist literary investigation. While this moment of radical interaction may have lapsed in the late 1990s, with government cutbacks that lead to the demise of Coach House Press and Studio D of the National Filmboard,² the influence of such interaction continues outside of the conservative retrenchment of the Ministry of Culture.³

As the two English novels that I analyze reveal, the influence of Québécoises writers, readers, and participants on Canadian lesbian writing has produced an affirmative deconstruction much closer to the Derridean development of new sense than to the Yale critics' aporia of political stagnation. Further, postcolonial aspects of Canada and Québec connect radical writing in this northern part of the North American continent with postcolonial theory. The work of Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, two major postcolonial theorists, directly engage Derrida's theories and pursue the leftist politics of affirmative deconstruction. Spivak's introduction to her translation, *Of Grammatology*, emphasizes the affirmative nature of Derrida's deconstruction. She clearly points to his "affirmative," anti-nostalgic reading of "Heideggerian *hope*" (xvi) and the "'double negation'" in Nietzsche's figuration of woman as the untruth of truth that creates a third

²Studio D produced *Firewords: Louky Bersianik, Jovette Marchessault, Nicole Brossard*, the 'translation' of Dorothy Todd Hénaut's film *Les terribles vivantes* — Louky Bersianik, Jovette Marchessault, Nicole Brossard. As subtitler/translator of *Firewords*, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood notes that the film is "[p]artly subtitled and partly dubbed." The Studio D remake is not simply a 'translation' because it also includes "scenes actually shot in English, so it is truly a 'version'" (*Re-Belle et infidèle* 164).

³Not one of these novels has received a Governor General's Award.

position of “‘dissimulating, artistic, Dionysiac,’” chaotic production (xxxvi). The postcolonial theories of Bhabha and Spivak exert additional influence on the cultural, literary, and critical production of postcolonial Canada and Québec that hover on the liminal borders of British, French, Canadian, and American ‘empires’ of late capitalism.

Marlatt admits that her theoretical knowledge developed extensively during her tenure at *Tessera*, a journal devoted to bringing together Canadian and Québécoises postmodern feminist writers. But her interest in French writing and philosophy can be traced back to her translation of Francis Ponge’s *Le parti pris des choses*⁴ and an essay comparing him with William Carlos Williams for her MA thesis in the 1960s (Barbour, “Daphne Marlatt” 189). Her *FRAMES of a story* (1968) investigates the narrative problem of female absence in the masculinist Hegelian self/other split that creates a “state of containment (not content —)” (4) in the binary negation of female difference, the “not content” that is more than dissatisfaction or a nonrepresentational literary aesthetic. Marlatt’s examination of female absence, her interest in Kristeva in “musing with mothertongue,” her collaboration with Brossard, and her work with Gail Scott and Barbara Godard on the board of *Tessera* contrast the intersecting postmodernism of Marlatt and Brossard with Frank Davey’s discussion of his own, seemingly paradigmatic, movement in 1974 to a Canadian postmodernism that emerges from Anglo-American

⁴Marlatt’s tangential connection with Derrida via her translation of Ponge reveals the posthumanist preoccupations of language poetry. Derrida includes Ponge in his deconstructive project in *Signéponge/Signsponge*.

high modernism (*Canadian Literary Power* 251).⁵ Unlike Davey's argument that Canadian postmodernism emerges from a "search for impersonality" linked to Modernist writers such as T.S. Eliot (251), Marlatt's area of investigation in *FRAMES* reflects a postmodern development that emerges as a connection between the continental and British modern feminism of such figures as Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf.

Yet Marlatt and Davey are not radically opposed: they both emerge from the West Coast *TISH*⁶ movement of the 1960s that developed in response to the American Black Mountain poetics of Charles Olson, Robert Duncan, and Robert Creeley. *TISH* and Black Mountain poetics connect with Derrida's deconstruction of Western humanism prior to Yale's critical institution of deconstruction in the late 1970-80s. As Douglas Barbour writes, "... 'composition by field' poetics takes a stand against the Humanism that began with Plato ... [and] against various manifestations of 'the patriarchal logos'" ("Daphne Marlatt" 195). Marlatt shares with *TISH* and Black Mountain poets an emphasis on local detail and the materiality of the page, the voice, the breath, and the corporeality of language. But sexism and a different sense of embodiment distanced Marlatt from the preoccupations of the *TISH* poets. In "Between Continuity and Difference," Marlatt comments on the gendered dynamics of the *TISH* members: "... I did feel a certain

⁵In *Signature Event Context*, the writer and critic Stephen Scobie discusses Derridean deconstruction in various Canadian literary texts, which also problematizes Davey's idea that other Canadian writers were not writing directly in relation to continental theory.

⁶The word *TISH* (an anagram for *shit*) is italicized and capitalized because it comes from the title of the journal the writers produced. Because typographical setting creates meaning in field composition poetics, I retain the full capitalization.

resistance to the dominance of the men. It was the men who really defined the terms of the prevailing aesthetic at the writing workshops . . .” (102). Davey’s statement that the *TISH* movement is characterized by the sense “of being *at home* in place, community, and language” (introduction, *The Writing Life* 19) is reflected in Marlatt’s local investigations in *Vancouver Poems* and *Steveston*. Yet, in those works and even more so in *FRAMES*, “Entering In: The Immigrant Imagination,” *Ana Historic*, *Salvage*, and *Taken*, the sense of “being *at home*” in Marlatt’s writing is qualified by a sense of cultural difference and displacement — as a woman, a British Australian-born Malaysian immigrant, and later as a lesbian.

Brossard’s roots in French poststructuralism go back to her early evacuation of the subject in *L’aube à la saison* (1965), as Louise Dupré notes (88-89), her experiment with the French nouveau roman in *Un Livre* (1970), her co-founding of the poststructuralist journal *La (Nouvelle) Barre du jour*, and her investigation of the Derridean “scène blanche” where words change meaning as they slip under erasure in *Le Centre blanc: poèmes 1965-1978*. When many Anglo-Canadian and American academic feminists were enthusing over Lacanian theory, Brossard and many of her Québécoises contemporaries had moved beyond Lacan’s prohibitive lack to emphasize a writing on and of lesbian and female bodies. This shift in Brossard’s work developed prominence in the lesbian focus of her trilogy *L’Amèr ou Le chapitre effrité* (1977), *Amantes* (1980), and *Le sens apparent* (1980).

Barbara Godard’s 1981 Dialogue Conference at York University was committed to bringing together Québécoises and Canadian feminists and led to the development of

Tessera, a postmodern, bilingual, feminist journal that has been highly influential in the development of contemporary Canadian feminist theory. *Tessera* has brought to the forefront some of the issues and processes of writing and translation that these novels deploy.⁷ In 1985-86 Marlatt and Brossard collaborated on *Mauve* and *Character/Jeu de lettres*, translations that investigate places of female embodiment in the materials and contingencies of language and rhetorical context that proliferate as they are translated across language systems. Writing of the synaptic interweaving between female mouths/bodies, graphism, and thought that produces the real, Brossard concludes *Mauve* with the lines “fiction culture cortex / M A U V E” (Marlatt, *Salvage* 98).⁸ In a quantum destabilization of organized language, the spaces between the letters of “mauve” translate without fidelity into “move” and twist themselves into “ma,” “maw,” and the “mouth.” A heterogeneous, porous hybridity moves across language systems and reveals a feminine embodiment that deterritorializes language. Contrarily, the movement of the untranslatable “mots” in “M A U” speaks to the specific differences of territoriality in the intersemiotic translation between bodies and languages (corps texte) that produces the synaptic (syntactic) “cortex” that is both abstract and embodied. Marlatt’s translation resorts to etymological strategies that connect the word “mauve” with “rose” (Marlatt, *Salvage* 102), and Gertrude Stein’s famous line (“a rose is a rose is a rose”) resonates in

⁷Marlatt was one of the founding editors of *Tessera*.

⁸The unpaginated chapbooks *Mauve* and *Character/Jeu de lettres* were published in Montréal through a collaborative effort between *Nouvelle barre du jour* and *Writing* in 1985 and 1986.

the etymological and intertextual strategies that bring the territorial lesbian bodies of English writing into the untranslatable “mot.”

The official bilingualism of Canada, along with the French-English influence of major Canadian feminist theorists such as Barbara Godard and bilingual academic associations like the Association of Canadian and Québec Literatures (ACQL), has meant that much of the early academic feminist agitation was produced in an alliance between anglophone and francophone literatures. As Brand’s Governor General’s Award for *Land to Light On* (1997) and the institutional development of the Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (CACLALS) testify, the rise of an anti-racist, anti-ethnocentric, and nonfoundational feminism and postcolonialism has challenged the French-English definition (and division) of literary interests to become less colonial in this northern part of North America. As I argue above, Spivak’s and Bhabha’s postcolonial theory connects directly with Derrida’s deconstruction. Consequently, the interwoven francophone and postcolonial influences have produced an affirmative deconstruction in the feminist practice of postmodernism in Canada that leans more heavily on French than American theory. The novels by Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand all develop an affirmative deconstruction of translation as transformation that can enact a lesbian drift in the movement of different territorially marked, or embodied, languages.

Davey argues that postmodernism in Canada has been subverted by “understandings from Europe and the United States that associate it with ‘free play’ and arbitrary construction.” Such “free play” dissociates it from the specific and local

contexts that are necessary for political critique (*Canadian Literary Power* 252). Yet

Robert J.C. Young writes that ‘free play’ is not a Derridean concept:

Perhaps nothing illustrates better the lack of historical awareness of our contemporary debates about literary theory than the fact that what is alleged to be one of the main culpable tenets of deconstruction, “free play,” is in fact a concept taken over into English from Schiller by Matthew Arnold. Derrida himself, of course, writing in French, never even uses the phrase: “free play” was merely the English translation from the innocuous *jeu*, meaning game, or play. One can only wonder how many of those who attack Derrida’s alleged irresponsibility and lack of moral commitment by citing this phrase would be just as happy if they had to cite Arnold’s name instead. But even Arnold’s notion of “free play” does not involve rampant irresponsibility, even if it rejects, again in apparent anticipation of Derrida, “canons of truth absolute and final.” (*Colonial Desire* 57)

Brossard often uses the word *l’enjeu* in *Le désert mauve*, perhaps indicating the stake of the *elle* in play (*L en jeu*), as I argue in the section on her novel. Derrida’s use of chance, or play, Jeffrey Nealon argues, is not what becomes in the Yale school a conservative deconstruction that stagnates in the success of failure and the inability to chose. Instead, Nealon argues, Derrida’s figuration of the affirmative role of chance in the creation of knowledge — as in the postcard that is read (and misread) by others and may not even reach its addressee — “allows us to thematize . . . this (im)possible (non)arrival of truth after the closure of representation” (99) without a commodifying reappropriation and sublation of irreducible sense (100). This is not, Nealon comments, a matter “of scrapping

the subjectivist category of representation — but rather of constantly undoing, of rethinking representation, end, and ground in writing” (102) rather than ‘free’ and unattached play. Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand retain a radical political force in their writing that Davey argues distinguishes the postcolonial critique of the centre of late capitalism in Canadian writing from Fredric Jameson’s depoliticizing connection of postmodernism with “global capitalism and its international marketing of mass-culture” (*Canadian Literary Power* 252). However, the political stance and resistance to commodification that Davey argues characterizes the poststructural engagement of Canadian writing as *postcolonial*, rather than *postmodern*, is also an endemic part of the deconstructive project before (or apart from) its American institutionalization. While *postmodernism* has been defined many different ways, my use of the term draws on this radical politics of a deconstructive postmodernism that produces new, uncommodifiable sense.

In *Canadian Literary Power* (1994), Davey modifies his enumeration of various postmodern texts in *Reading Canadian Reading* (1988) to argue that *postmodern* is not a useful term in Canada, since there are “no major institutions affiliated with it, no publishing houses constructed as publishers of postmodernism, no journals of ‘Canadian postmodernism’” (285). In the 1994 publication, his previous list of novels, books of poetry, intersecting critical and literary performances, conferences, radio programs, on-line productions and performances, journals, and more (*Reading Canadian Reading* 105-22) disappear as inadequate. Canadian political struggle, Davey argues,

[has been] taken up within Canadian literature by various constituencies under

specialized banners — postcolonialism, gay rights, Canadian regionalism, feminism, aboriginal rights, south Asian culture, poststructuralist theory — almost all of which have developed their own institutions and publishers, and have represented themselves more effectively, both in literary and general politics, than they ever did under a postmodern umbrella. (*Canadian Literary Power* 285)

In his view, the postmodern “umbrella” commodifies and appropriates the specific political agency of incommensurable, particular foci. Yet Davey’s metaphor of a postmodern “umbrella” is a problem that necessitates the abdication. The rhizomatic movement of intersubjectivity in my theory brings together many of Davey’s different concerns without reduction. This is only possible in a postmodernism that enacts what, drawing on Foucault’s destabilized flows of power, Judith Butler calls “antifoundationalist . . . coalition politics” (*Gender Trouble* 15): a coalition which presumes no statement of unity. The “institutional” locations of a rhizomatic, postmodern, feminist politics are evident in Marlatt’s co-organization and co-editing of the proceedings of such conferences as *Telling It: Women and Language Across Cultures* and *Women and Words*, as well as in her participation on the board of the journal *Tessera*, a self-identified “postmodern” journal. The conferences and the journal had and have a feminist focus, but they also include a heterogenous mixture of the “specialized banners” to which Davey refers. This rhizomatic agenda has become important for a contemporary lesbian and feminist politics that remains open to various methodologies, priorities, and differences generated within the specific historical situations of lesbians and women across cultures.

Linda Hutcheon also has difficulty reading political agitation into postmodernism. Yet she does not even entertain the idea of a feminist nonfoundational politics raised by a deconstructive project. In *The Canadian Postmodern*, she argues, “. . . the particular political agenda of feminism makes it substantially different in intent from the more complicitous questioning of the political (that is, usually without any final answers) that characterizes postmodernism” (107). And Hutcheon is not alone in this political scepticism. Lesbian and feminist criticism has often resisted poststructuralism and deconstruction because the radical evacuation of the subject has not been seen as politically effective for those who have not had the privilege to be subjects. In a joint interview with Smaro Kamboureli, Lola Lemire Tostevin comments on the problem of deconstructing the subject for feminists: “When someone pointed out to me recently the importance of ridding oneself of the ‘I’ in writing, I said, ‘Great, I’ll lose it as soon as I find it’” (“Where the Imaginary Takes Over” 136). Similarly, Nancy K. Miller writes:

The postmodernist decision that the Author is Dead and the subject along with him does not . . . necessarily hold for women, and prematurely forecloses the question of agency for them. Because women have not had the same historical relation of identity to origin, institution, production that men have had, they have not, I think (collectively) felt burdened by *too much* Self, Ego, Cogito, etc. Because the female subject has juridically been excluded from the polis, hence decentred, “disoriginated,” deinstitutionalized, etc., her relation to integrity and textuality, desire and authority, displays structurally important differences from that universal position. (“Changing the Subject” 6)

Even given social oppression and repression, a contemporary feminist strategy needs to account for the differences within the category of gender as well as the way the subject is not an outside agent but a mobile effect of discourse and contingent relations. Hutcheon recognizes the need to speak of multiple “feminisms,” rather than a singular “feminism,” and admits that the “split identities” of “[t]hose ex-centrics outside the ‘mainstream’ . . . have made them feel closer to the postmodern concerns for difference and multiplicity” (107). Yet she is unable to connect this postmodern undecidability with a nonfoundational politics that *is* the contingent and contra-dictory coalition that inscribes the idea of multiple feminisms working together for change without colonizing the agenda.

Hutcheon’s representational reduction produces an aporetic stasis of “irony” in orality represented in the printed word: “. . . dynamic oral presence can be conveyed to us today only in static print; the oratorical power that goes beyond words can be recounted only in words . . .” (56). Yet, I argue, the orality of the writers in this study do not move beyond *words* but beyond words as abstract, metaphorical concepts that are violently separated from bodies. Orality is not only the verbal presence and interaction of the speaker, the participants, the stories, mythologies, and gossip shared in the storytelling (Hutcheon 53-54) but also the corporeal bodies of sound that can derail the equation of a word with a representational substance. For example, Brossard’s phrase “le tout bas des mots,” which appears as the corporeality of throat/mouth, also derails from the referential corporeal concept of whispered words and transgresses national borders of language on the heterogeneous bodies of sound to become *tubas* sounding the base and rhythm of

heterogeneous bodies already in language (*Le désert mauve* 219). This is not the distinction that Hutcheon makes between a poetry that “may keep a metaphoric conception of language alive today” in contrast with the novel — “that long, resolutely written form — that belongs to another linguistic order” (54). Instead these poets/novelists write a language of embodied sounds that meet and make nonsystemic sense. Elizabeth Grosz figures this movement between bodies and thought/language in *Volatile Bodies* as the fluid connection of a Möbius strip, a transformation between the inside and the outside that creates something other than either original. This kind of orality does not uphold the binary separations of language/body, inside/outside, signifier/signified, or presence/absence of the speaker or referent but inscribes what Pamela Banting calls an “interlanguage” that leaps between bodily senses and linguistic concepts without resolving in the plenitudinous fulfilment (and absence) of a final target language. The difference between the senses of the signifiers that translate into different sign systems keeps language moving.

Hutcheon suggests that different bodies produce different language by arguing that postmodern Canadian women writers challenge the manner in which Ferdinand de Saussure’s linguistic system ignores “social and ideological, as well as individual, contexts” (115). However, her discussion of the connection between verbal puns and maternal bodies in Audrey Thomas’s *Intertidal Life* resolves in an aporetic quietude: “. . . while motherhood brings with it pain and responsibility, it also wields power . . . and can give strength” (116-18). The novels in my study push beyond Hutcheon’s formulation of a (stagnant) parodic critique of “. . . women’s needs to define themselves in terms of their

men, and also their shared yearning to seek stability, security, and guidance from men” (114). Instead Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand inscribe a deconstructive agitation for change into postmodernism. The materiality of signs (bodies and languages) speaks beyond a stagnant parody of existing discourse and leans toward what Marlatt clearly depicts in *Taken*, and Kelly Oliver theorizes, as a corporeality that is already inscribed by differences that enable communication, discourse, and a speaking of what has been called the unspeakable.

Hutcheon argues that Robert Kroetsch, “Mr Canadian Postmodern” (160) himself, shares feminist concerns that challenge humanist notions of “centred identity, coherent subjectivity, and aesthetic originality. He offers instead decentred multiplicity, split selves, and double-voiced parody” (161-62). However, the deconstructive challenge to the masculinist humanist subject in the novels I examine is not a “decentred multiplicity.” Instead, Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand develop an intersubject that acts with what Spivak calls a “para-centrality,” in which the heterogeneous signs retain a micropolitical focus (*Post-Colonial Critic* 147). Hutcheon comments that Kroetsch’s parodic decentring of “the male will to knowledge and control . . . is more ambivalent, more postmodern, perhaps” than that of the women writers she examines (164). There is “no balancing of opposites, just underlining duality” (165). Hutcheon’s “more postmodern” simply reifies the Yale school’s conservative influence. The difference between the “para-centrality” of multiplicity that creates agency for change in an intersubject and the decentred subject generated from the privilege once inscribed by the humanist subject reflects a difference of strategy between a white, Eurocentric, and masculinist centre (that now claims

marginal, decentred status) and the development of new sense in this postmodern lesbian “desiring writing” that speaks what has been named unspeakable, unreadable, and unreal. While Hutcheon admits that “ridicule or laughter are not the only aims of . . . [postmodern] parody” (166), satire and humour require the authority of a subject’s control over meaning that these writers do not deploy. The parody of gendered coding in these novels is a serious gesture that enables, as Butler argues, the inscription of something new without relying on an essentialist pre-linguistic outside.

The desiring intersubject is an affirmative deconstruction. Excluded by (not just from) the privilege of a proper subject, she does not erect the ego-bound “I” of the unary subject or parodically decentre herself from that position of control. Instead, she comes to speak a joyous game of serious stakes: she comes into existence as a mobile intersubject when particles collide, break off, spin into orbit with other nuclei, and create something new that can be as brief as a virtual particle that appears and disappears in the cortex of the reader and as lengthy as the intersubjective reading act that changes the reader forever.

Part II. Desiring Speed: Aerial Bodies of Lesbian “Desiring Writing” in Nicole
Brossard’s *Le désert mauve*

Introduction

As I explain in “Toward a Desiring Intersubjectivity,” Alice Parker’s term “desiring writing” relates to my own preoccupation with an affirmative deconstruction that enables the continual production of new concepts, positions, and intersubjects in the spaces that open between the poles and within the substances of binary thought. The partiality of all elements in a body without organs, rather than their insufficiency, lack, or essential unknowability, enables quantum connections and mutations between the partial elements. Partial elements are not only mobile but also changeable. In the analogy of quantum physics, the smallest identifiable substance is a molecule. Quantum particles are the constituent elements of molecules but do not have the identity or coherence of substances. As electrons get excited, they speed up, can fly away from the original nucleus they orbit, and can either connect with another nuclear centre or form virtual particles that appear and disappear with no apparent reason or logic. In this positivity of quantum particles that in themselves mean nothing (are not substances), languages and bodies, and selves and others, connect with a catachrestic positivity that has no metaphysical meaning of originary truth or essence and, thus, refuse the castration complex that would imply the *méconnaissance* and insufficiency of language to grasp the whole truth. The desiring holes in Brossard’s quantum language are not figured through the castration complex of inadequacy but through the partiality of all textual and corporeal bodies that create a “desiring writing.”

The presence of lesbian “desiring writing” in Brossard’s *Le désert mauve* has no substantial solidity or metaphysical positivity. The quantum elements spin, flow, and

change. Brossard poses certain strategic, or molecular, figurations that map her historical and geographical position as a Québécoise writer. However, the figurations are only strategic, since they shift meaning in contextual locations and are undercut by difference that reveals they have no essential meaning or foundation. As Gayatri Spivak argues, such erasure characterizes the catachresis of a strategic essentialism. Brossard's shifting gaze poses alternatives within each character and between the philosophic languages that inform the perspectives of her fictional author, Laure Angstelle, and her fictional translator, Maude Laures. In the movement between the points, a rhizomatic or aerial desire speeds between the incomparable material bodies of languages, thought, and corporeality and creates a virtual becoming lesbian of "desiring writing" on the event-horizon of quantum interaction within and between molecular particles. On the event-horizon that is not an object or a place, Brossard evokes a utopian hope to change reality, to change narrative, and to move beyond the oppressive Oedipal inscription of women as objects of desire¹ and of a desire premised on the phallogocentric lack inscribed in the subject through comparative reduction in representational language. The contradictions within the characters and between the fictional author and the fictional translator posit heterogeneous differences of lesbian inscription that open the utopian concept of 'no place' into a nonfoundationalist coalition politics that resists the defining exclusion of an organized and focused gaze. Lesbian "desiring writing" is indescribable because it is not

¹Brossard writes, "Elle disait ne pas supporter la routine du sujet, verbe, complément à laquelle la narration prédisposait" / "She said she couldn't stand the subject-verb-object routine to which narrative inclined" (*She Would Be* 12, 11, 13).

a substance: it is neither the specifics of Maude Laures's nor Laure Angstelle's writing. However, on the event-horizon that opens between the molecular substances of each text, Brossard makes lesbian desire in language readable as the negotiations that each contextually located writer makes with the specifics of the language in which she writes. In *Picture Theory*, Brossard figures this utopian 'no place' as the tridimensional woman of the holograph that can emerge only in the abstraction of fiction that enables a synchronous evocation from three different perspectives.

In the movement between the partial bodies of lesbian desire (textual, corporeal, and abstract) inscribed by writers, readers, and translators, a lesbian intersubjectivity develops that has no subject and no object of desire. It is a meeting between figures, sounds, concepts, texts, languages, and corporeal bodies that contaminate and change each other in an erotic movement of Brossardian "délire." The intersubjective meeting enacts what Pamela Banting calls a movement of translation between intersemiotic (between verbal and nonverbal signifying systems), intralingual (within one language), and interlingual (between languages) signifying systems that become the "surfaces of sense."

The Surfaces of Sense is the title of Fiona Strachan's translation of Brossard's *Les sens apparent*. In that text, Brossard investigates the quantum movements of mind and body that create an embodied language and meaning that inscribes "LA FORME ARDENTE" (7) as the creative and "*lumineux*" (50) quantum holes of "une cinquième dimension" (10) that appears "Sans raison apparente" (11) and enables "les sens s'ouvrent à la spirale" (15). The event of "délire" (15), as a delirious, desiring unreading,

in the mobility of “l’atome vif et soif” (36) opens the “surfaces of sense” to the possibility that “TOUTES LES FUTURES DE FICTION SON SI RÉELLES” (12) / “ALL FICTIVE ESCAPES ARE SO REAL” (Strachan 12). Brossard’s unreading of the hidden depths or unknowable originary locations of the substantial Lacanian ‘real’ parallels the anti-psychoanalytic theory of Deleuze and Guattari. The quantum mechanics of mobile, holey, and partial surface elements form desiring connections that redefine what is taken as real. Brossard writes the desiring becoming of newness that emerges when body and language, landscape and theory, territorial location and deterritorialized abstraction, intersect. Language enters the mouth and erases the fullness of any binary position: “D’ores et déjà c’était à double sens et tout au présent” (5) / “From this moment there were double meanings and everything was in the present” (Strachan 5). A quantum “délire” on the fictional and corporeal “surfaces of sense” becomes a lesbian “war machine” (Deleuze and Guattari) that decodes and erases sedimented meaning and produces desire as an action of uncontainable becoming in heterogeneous connections and irreducible surfaces of partial presences. Chewing language is a vital deconstruction that “Partie de sa belle encre, la belle prose et *l’éclat rageur des dents*, ce qui en est resté” (9) / “Started off in beautiful ink, beautiful prose and *the glint of gnashing teeth*, what remained of them” (Strachan 9). Brossard’s postmodern praxis resists the essentialist/constructivist split that distinguishes origin from end, body from language, inside from outside, depth from surface, subject from object, and presence from absence. Categorical recuperation becomes impossible in the contaminating flights and passages to and beyond the limit of other systems of sense, which resist the containment or

commodification of sense in any one. This inscribes a lesbian “desiring writing” that is unspeakable within logical terms, but is readable in the desiring affect, intensity, and emotion that is caused by the excitement of particular quantum bodies.

Chapter 5. Brossard's Fictional Origins, Fictional Real

The chapter on Brossard in Annamarie Jagose's *Lesbian Utopics* that I criticize in "Toward a Desiring Intersubjectivity" is, ironically, helpful because Jagose supports her analysis of Brossard's essentialist reliance on prediscursive foundations with an excellent discussion of the instability and chaos within the regulatory regimes of power. Because linguistic instability forms the centre of Brossard's poetics, a perverse reading of Jagose's criticism of essentialism provides insight into Brossard's strategies. Throughout *Lesbian Utopics*, Jagose applies Foucault's theory on the production of knowledge to undermine the deployment of "the notion of an exterior space whose utopic constitution is based on its excess of regulatory structures" in order to constitute such concepts as a lesbian "space beyond the symbolic order . . . [and] patriarchal nomination" (23). While Jagose acknowledges ". . . Brossard's apparently constructionist prioritization of language as the site of political struggle and her insistence on 'women' and 'lesbian' as discursively constructed categories," she argues that Brossard's transgressive strategy ultimately relies on "her essentialist positings of an inalienable femininity, prohibited by patriarchy yet nevertheless existing somehow beyond its bounds . . ." (22). However, by relying only on the English translation of *The Aerial Letter* and not considering any of Brossard's more challenging ficto-poetic works, Jagose's critical reading continually misses the way any of Brossard's essentialist allusions are always undercut by discursive constructions.

Brossard disposed of the subject long before English-speaking feminist theorists such as Jagose were taken by the topic. To support her argument for Brossard's deployment of a "natural," "prediscursive," lesbian body, and an unproblematic proper

subject, Jagose quotes Wildeman's translation and then criticizes:

"in sum, then, to write is to be a subject in process, moving, changing, a being in pursuit of. To write, you must first belong to yourself" (133). The first sentence represents writing as the endlessly deferred process of constituting oneself as a subject, its final dangling preposition mimetically indicates writing's infinite postponement of identificatory closure. The second sentence, however, restabilizes the concept of identity, assigning it emphatically and unproblematically to the subject, as the subject's property. (51)

Curiously, a theorist of discursive construction and close linguistic analysis fails to attend to the difference installed in any translation and provides a critique of Brossard's theory that depends on the language of Wildeman's translation. Brossard's French sentence does not include a "dangling preposition." Brossard writes: "En résumé, il faut pour écrire être un sujet en mouvement et en recherche. Pour écrire, il faut d'abord s'appartenir" (124). While the idea of a subject in process occurs in the original, the idea of a fixed identity that belongs to the subject is only partial, a "strategic essentialism" (Spivak) undercut by difference. What Jagose is unable to account for in her reliance on the translation is the fluid undecidability of Brossard's language. *S'appartenir* not only means 'belonging,' 'a possession,' 'what is proper to the subject' (whom Brossard figures as "l'essentielle": *essence + elle* [*Sous la langue/Under Tongue* n.p.]), but is also synonymous with *concerner* (*Larousse*), which supports the opening terms of investigation, "en recherche": the subject must, first of all, be concerned with and investigate the self. Rather than a simplistic reliance on the proper subject, the investigation points to Spivak's argument

that, in a catachrestic figuration of “strategic essentialism,” the figure (always within discourse) is used for its enabling qualities that posit essential difference but is pushed to the limit and reveals the improbable foundations of that essence.

Further, Jagose’s indictment of Brossard’s “essentialist positings of an inalienable femininity” (22) and “a concept of exteriority as the site of resistance to phallocentrism and . . . the very condition of female homosexuality” (30) weighs heavily on her parallel simplistic reading of Luce Irigaray’s “When Our Lips Speak Together,” which she cites as a source for Brossard’s theory. Jagose argues that the liberatory and exterior relations of homosexuality are aligned with a pre-verbal fusion between the mother and the daughter: “. . . various collapses [are] effected between an autoeroticism, a pre-Oedipal, and therefore precultural and prediscursive, undifferentiation from the mother and, finally, a female homosexuality” (30). Jagose misquotes her evidence from Irigaray’s translated text as “Excuse me Mother, I prefer a woman to you” (30). The translation of that passage by Catherine Porter (the text Jagose cites) actually reads: “forgive me, mother, I prefer a woman” (*This Sex* 209), which echoes Catholic confessional rhetoric: “Forgive me, father, for I have sinned. My last confession was [blank] months ago. These are my sins: . . .” Without even going into the distinction Irigaray draws in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* between the discursive construction of an unspeaking ‘mother’ and a ‘woman’ who is a linguistic and social subject, the Catholic rhetoric highlights the mimetic twisting that always keeps Irigaray’s context within language and discursive construction. As Alice Parker argues in *Liminal Visions of Nicole Brossard*, Brossard does not address a ‘universal woman,’ but looks from “certain feminist ‘angles of

vision” clearly situated within a context of the literary and cultural colonization of francophone women in Québec by “anglophone rulers and the Roman Catholic Church” (8). The strategic essentialisms of the various and shifting figures of “l’essentielle,” even the outrageous linguistic chain in *Le désert mauve* that links the character Angela with the Roman Catholic angelus of praise to Mary, who embodies the body of God and enables the materialization of his Word in flesh,¹ are located in specific historic discourses, the (pre)texts that leap between issues of national and phallogocentric colonization,² French poststructuralist theory, and French and American lesbian and feminist discourses.

¹This chain that connects Mary, the angel, God, language, and meaning is outrageous for several reasons. With fidelity to the Roman Catholic system of belief, Christ is the figure that embodies the Word of God. Mary is simply his meaningless matrix, the unspeaking womb, meaningless body, and not-self that enables the transcendental masculinist ego to take form. It is also outrageous because Brossard continually resists Roman Catholic doctrine, as I mention above. However, following an embodied movement in the word without fidelity to religious doctrine, Angela’s name links through sound to the words *angel* and *angelus*. The angel links both to the angel of the Lord who announced to Mary that she had conceived the Lord (Laure), as well as to what Dorothy L. Sayers translates in the argument to Canto 1 of Dante’s *Hell* as “the shade,” ghost, or angel of Virgil, who guides Dante to his departed beloved, Beatrice, and to Beatrice whose divine earthly form allegorically embodies the presence of God in Mary. The emphasis on dawn, noon, and night in *Le désert mauve* also links Angela with Mary, since the angelus that praises Mary’s direct connection with God is sung during those times.

²Parker writes:

The fiction [*Le désert mauve*] is a mediation on writing as translation, and on feminist consciousness as a simultaneous translation from an alien tongue. One referent is the dual-language sociotext in Québec and Brossard’s perception that her ‘native’ language and culture are gravely threatened by *anglophonie* [English speakers] at home and by colonizing encroachments from the United States. This situation is further complicated by the linguistic variations between classical French and Québécois speech and diction, and the ambivalence Canadian speakers feel toward the ‘mother’ tongue. (134-35)

In *Le désert mauve*, the pretexts for speculations on lesbian desire, subjectivity, and language remain fictional. Not only is nothing autobiographical known about the original source of the original text (the possibly pseudonymous Laure Angstelle), but, as Parker suggests, the “ricochet movement between text and text,” between inside and outside, between narrator, author, and translator, refuses to “distinguish between the original (real) and the translation (imitation).” As a translator of fiction, Maude Laures not only investigates lesbian “desire (the pathways between the symbolic and the imaginary)” (Parker 144) but also reveals that the pure origin or abstract ‘real’ that words and fictions are metaphysically said to approximate through difference is a fiction. This recognition enables flights of passage and desiring difference. Maude Laures inscribes Laure Angstelle as the lesbian textual embodiment of that fictional unknowable origin, which is always already a translation between systems:

Tout n’est encore qu’intention de *faire passer*. Perspective répétée de l’aller-retour. Recours à l’original, néanmoins la démarche interposée, la dérive comme un choc culturel, une émotion grave semée de miroirs et de mirages. . . . Cela la rassurait de savoir qu’elle était libre de tout (imaginer) à son sujet. . . . [Maude Laures] pouvait l’imaginer [Laure Angstelle] . . . vivant encore isolée quelque part entre Globe et Gila. (61)

Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood’s translation reads:³

Everything is still just intention to *carry over*. Repeated perspective of the two-

³Throughout I will follow Brossard’s text with de Lotbinière-Harwood’s translation.

way passage. Resorting to the original, nevertheless, the intervening process, the drift like a cultural shock, a grave emotion sown with mirrors and mirages. . . . Reassured by the knowledge that she was free of everything (she could imagine) about her. . . . [Maude Laures] could imagine her [Laures Angstelle] . . . still living isolated somewhere between Globe and Gila. (57)

The performative difference inscribed in passing (as a woman, as straight) is well-documented in lesbian and queer theory.⁴ Brossard deploys the parody of passing (“*faire passer*”) as the performance of the metaphysical transit between the original and its copy. Between particular placements, between the towns of Globe and Gila, the originary text of Angstelle (the fiction of the feminine “l’auteure” / “*auther*” as well as her originary novel) becomes an always already crossed through transcendental signifier of lesbian inhabitation in the interwoven sexual, textual, and geographical bodies. With the metaphoric extrapolation of the particular into the abstract, Maude Laures’s construction of Laure Angstelle traverses the space between the particular gila monster of symbolic representation and the particular global abstract of the imaginary to construct the palimpsest of a strategic essentialism of lesbian difference in a symbolic that has a fictional origin.

⁴ See, for example, the discussions of parodic drag by such critics as Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* and “Imitation and Gender Subordination”; Sue-Ellen Case, “Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic”; and Carole-Anne Tyler, “Boys Will Be Girls: The Politics of Gay Drag.” To stretch the container even further, Teresa de Lauretis’s theory of the lesbian excess of abjection and lack (*Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire*) could also be read as passing within psychoanalysis (the normative economy of the sexed subject).

Between full presence and the supplementary absence of language, Brossard's linguistic chain of gold opens the horizon of desire and subjectivity into "délire," a Brossardian term for swirling delirium and the process of reading and unreading (Godard, "Producing Visibility" 126) that creates partial presences in language. In "*Le désert mauve* de Nicole Brossard, ou l'indicible référent," Henri Servin links lesbian intertexts, chemical or biological molecular elements, and lesbian space and desire in the unspeakable 'real' through a rhizomatic chain of material, or embodied, sounds within "la dimension sensuelle des mots" (58), the affective surfaces of language. "Mauve," "Maude," "mot" (word), "l'aube" (dawn), "Laure(s)," "Lor" (the abbreviation of Lorna's name), "l'or" (gold), "Lorna," and "l'horizon" textually connect through a homolinguistic translation without fidelity, a repetition and drift between *l'or* (gold) and its chemical sign ("Au") (Servin 61). Brossard's poem *Mauve* and Daphne Marlatt's translation without fidelity, or "transformance . . . lured beyond equivalence" with Brossard's poem (Marlatt, *Readings from the Labyrinth* 70), are both drawn into the intertextual chain of literary origins ("une parenté littéraire" [Servin 61]). 'Origin' becomes a performative translation on the material surfaces of language unchained from the depth of representational meaning.

Brossard's golden chain is not simply, as Servin insists, "une quête de l'absolu . . . [pour] saisir l'ineffable, l'indicible, c'est-à-dire référent parfait, le désert indescriptible" (62). She also deconstructs the fiction of depth that creates the unspeakable female body and makes it speak by transgressing its excessive inscriptions. Brossard's intertextual reference to Petrarch's Madonna Laura, in his *Rime Sparse*, takes her quest for the

absolute origin of *logos* back to the fictional “lore.” As Philippa Berry argues in *On Chastity and Power: Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen*, the creative and inspirational powers of Petrarch’s Laura “are comparable to those of Wisdom, or of Christ as *logos*” (22). Brossard’s naming of Lorna Myher, Laure Angstelle, and Maude Laures echoes Petrarch’s search for transcendental enlightenment in his beloved Laura with difference inscribed in the transgressive material body of language that makes linguistic connections between Angstelle, Angela, the angelus, and the word embodied in the mother, embodied in the female body of Mary rather than the masculine body of Christ.⁵ Through these fictions of truth, the origin of full presence is revealed as already fictional, which means it can be reinscribed: “Puis l’aube, le désert et mauve, l’horizon” (220) / “Then dawn, the desert and mauve, the horizon” (202). The act of “*délire*,” a delirious unreading and deconstruction, spins the golden elements into partial signs of linguistic presence for making sense in an embodied language of surfaces.

In the spiral of “*délire*,” Brossard deconstructs the metaphysical myth of linguistic lack that is always divided from phallogocentric full presence and inscribes an endless multiplicity of partial and shifting presences. In *She Would Be the First Sentence of My Next Novel/Elle serait la première phrase de mon prochain roman* (a publication which is simultaneously translated by de Lotbinière-Harwood), Brossard speaks of her desire to

⁵ Parker also discusses the linguistic movement of Angstelle’s name into the German *angst* and wonders, “Is the project to domesticate the emotion inscribed in Angst-elle/angle/angel?” (141). Rather than revealing the domesticating containment of women as mothers, perhaps this inscribes her ability to join the nonsystemic rhizomatic connections that create flights of passage beyond such domesticating anxiety.

write a vital, embodied language/tongue (“la langue”) of “*mille présences suggestive qui tombent bien au milieu des pensées*” / “*a thousand provocative presences that fall into place in the middle of thoughts*” (132, 133). By levelling the verticality of the metaphysical system to the horizontal connection of whirling surfaces, effects, and affects, Brossard opens the horizon of thought, desire, and subjectivity to include what has been fictionalized as unspeakable or unknowable. By revealing origin as fictional inscription, Brossard is able to transgress the demarcations between the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic and inscribe reality in language. This connection between categorical distinctions enables a female “desiring writing” to refuse the essentialism of a symbolic subject premised on the phallic separation of the individual from the abjected maternal body and dismiss the threat of castration that ensures the separation of language and discursive construction from the body as the unspeakable true referent of the subject’s original intent (*vouloir dire*).

Chapter 6. Affirmative, Utopian, Lesbian Deconstruction

Recent poststructuralist accusations of essentialism (such as those raised by Annamarie Jagose and Judith Butler) have focused on a writer's use of the body as something outside discourse, some pre- or extra-linguistic space that enables feminist writers to posit difference. However, both the concept of a pre-linguistic body and the criticism of the impossibility of embodied difference rely on an essentialist binary separation of body and language and a regulatory subject that are established in a psychoanalytic desire premised on lack. In Julia Kristeva's theory of the *chora*, corporeal alterity is seen as originary drives that are outside language and before the bar of repression, prohibition, and disavowal that develops a subject who is split between the unknowable unconscious (pre-linguistic) and the symbolic of language. The *chora* can never be spoken because, once spoken, it loses the fluidity, chaos, and disorganization that enables it to push against the organized symbolic and inscribe the unspeakable in rhythm and sound. Kristeva resists the poststructuralist dissolution of the outside as an effect of discourse because, as Toril Moi writes, ". . . it doesn't go far enough, remaining as it does enclosed in the field of the signifier alone," and risks the containment of *différance* (intro., *Kristeva Reader* 17). However, Kristeva's theory still leaves the origin of resistance to phallogocentrism unspeakable and outside the symbolic, reiterating the impossibility of language and subjectivity that are not inscribed by lack and the threat of castration. Brossard's deployment of fictional origins resists the metaphysics of Kristeva's sense of difference in an embodied language generated from a pre-Oedipal *chora*.

The concept of pre-linguistic drives is one half of a binary opposition between inside (a depth that is outside language) and outside (objectified representations that are inside systems of representation). The other side, the pure graphocentrism of a poststructuralist subject, is equally essentialist and simply inverts the terms of argument. In *Le désert mauve*, Brossard criticizes the essentialism of L'homme long, the nuclear physicist who figures a masculinist poststructuralism¹ that violently explodes the outside (for example, landscape, body, alterity, lesbian desire) by conjoining it with the inside and disavowing its difference as untruth, a fiction constructed by discourse.² As Catherine Perry argues in "L'imagination créatrice dans *Le désert mauve*: transfiguration de la réalité dans le projet féministe," L'homme long's binary world is reflected in the black-and-white photographs and his alienation from his body. Perry writes, "L'unique fois où il s'énonce comme sujet, le *je* est même disloqué du reste de la phrase: hachurée par des barres transversales, celle-ci révèle le manque total de communication d'un élément à l'autre: '*I / am / become / Death*'" (589). Separated as he is from the abjected "bitter mother" (amer [bitter], la mer [the sea], la mère [the mother]) of phallogocentric coding

¹ Karen Gould notes, "... despite the direct references to Oppenheimer's well-documented habits and trademarks — the cigarette and the felt hat in particular — the anonymity of this lone male character in an otherwise empathically women-centred text clearly reinforces his function as a primarily symbolic presence" (*Writing in the Feminine* 99).

²In "Plato's Pharmacy," Derrida argues that the outlaw, the prisoner, the scapegoat — what he calls the *pharmakeus* — is generated from within the society. The prisoner is fed, clothed, and housed within the city in order to define the proper citizen. Thus, the inside and the outside bind together as a reflection of the same conceptual system: the definition of what is outside (the improper outlaw) reflects and constructs the inside (the proper citizen) and vice versa (*Dissemination* 120-33).

that Brossard deconstructs in her *L'amèr ou le chapitre effrité*, he embodies the violent Lacanian split within the subject who can never know the unspeakable real. His impotent desire is founded in the gap between the need (real) and its misrecognized demand (symbolic): “L’homme long se sentit fragile, plein d’une solitude amère. Il se vit brisé, miroir, fraction, incapable de chiffrer sa blessure. Alors il sombra impuissant dans la demande” (35) / “Longman felt fragile, full of a bitter solitude. He saw himself broken, mirror, fraction, incapable of figuring out his wound. So he sank impotent in prayer” (31). As a figure of Barthes’s “The Death of the Author” and death of the subject in masculinist poststructuralism (see also Derrida and Foucault), he embodies the essentialism and solidification of binary opposition in a negative deconstruction that eradicates the outside and the real of corporeality as nothing but the effect of the disciplinary regimes of power and the bar of language.³ He is the Alpha and the Omega of Apocalypse — the beginning and the end — and the closure of the horizon of thought as it shrinks with the evacuation of any sense outside language.

³In a discussion of the influence of French deconstructionist theory on Brossard and her different view of the body text, Karen Gould includes Hélène Cixous among the deconstructionists who focus on the materiality of the text but ignore the desiring body:

The influence of Barthes, Bataille, and Cixous is self-evident. . . . Hence, the privileging in [Brossard’s] work since 1973 of such notions as the desiring body, *le cortex* (the body text), the pleasure of writing, and *jouissance* (bliss) or *extase* (ecstasy). Yet the discourses of Barthes and Cixous in the early 1970s speak of a body in writing whose gender is secondary at best, even if *le féminin* is the term of preference to describe the body’s libidinal economy, as in the case of Cixous. By 1974, however, Brossard’s emerging feminist consciousness and political activism cause her to give that “neutral” body (and text) a distinctly female sex and to *feminize* as well both the desire to write and the inscription of her own desire. (*Writing in the Feminine* 70-71)

Instead of such divisive negation, Brossard practises what Parker calls “a ‘vital’ abstraction” (105), a form of affirmative deconstruction that says the Derridean “yes and yes” to the subject who is an effect of discourse and a living body/surface of vital connections. Brossard’s affirmation does not rely on Kristeva’s theory of drives in a pre-Oedipal and pre-linguistic corporeality. Instead, her embodied language is a bio-electric circuit of neural leaps and sparks that make sense, thought, and language among the quantum, molecular, and shifting presences of the “cortex,” her figure for a space where body (corps) touches discourse (texte) and becomes something other that changes both originals (*Amantes* 106 / *Lovhers* 106). In *Le désert mauve*, as Perry argues, there is an intimate relationship between the sounds of the women’s names and their meanings when translated across English, Greek, and German. The lesbian figures are produced by the slippery connections between several languages that remain embodied in the sound of the mouth. They have no pre-linguistic essence but come into existence in the material transit between the heterogeneous surfaces of bodies and languages. This is not a Lacanian split subject or the Nietzschean or Derridean philosophic negation of unspeakable truth as the catachresis of continually receding metaphoric substitution that reveals only the cold distance of metaphor and language at its origin. Brossard’s shifting connections between multiple surfaces of material presence enact an embodied lesbian language and subjectivity that Pamela Banting identifies as an “interlanguage” in her analysis of Daphne Marlatt’s texts, a language that does not exist as an object outside any existing signifying system but becomes intelligible in the continual acts of intersemiotic (between verbal and nonverbal signs), interlingual (between languages), and intralingual (within

the same language) translation.⁴ “Délire” on the surfaces of the cortex (the textual and corporeal bodies) refuses psychoanalytic depth and enacts a transgression from within that begins to make lisible what has been constructed as unspeakable.

Brossard’s affirmative “yes and yes” provides, as she writes in “Les pas juxtaposés du désir,” “le seul recours que nous ayons pour comprendre les mondes simultanément déserts et encombrés que nous habitons . . .” [the only recourse we have to understand these simultaneously deserted and encumbered worlds we inhabit]. Without the play of strategic essentialisms and corporeal location, she writes, the feminine disappears into “un ‘grand down’ masculin” (29). Like Mélanie and Angela in *Le désert mauve*, Brossard works near “Death Valley Junction” (93 / 99), the junction between the deaths of the author, subject, and body,⁵ but her work near them explodes their

⁴Banting argues that, conventionally, translation moves from the source language to the target language. However, she argues, in the attempted creation of a (m)othertongue, the target language does not exist:

She [the feminist writer] writes in the spaces between and among languages. Translating from a source language — the mother tongue as native language, the vernacular — which is never entirely pure or unitary [—] into a target language — often notated as the (m)othertongue — which does not exist as a language separate unto itself either, the feminist writing practices which engage both Cixous and Marlatt, *écriture féminine* and writing the (m)othertongue, involve the exploration of writing as a process of translation into a language that emerges *only* in the act of translation. Such writing inscribes an “interlanguage,” a separate, yet intermediate, linguistic system situated between a source language and a target. . . . (163)

⁵Between territorial geographical location and deterritorialized metaphor and linguistic translation, the Mauve Motel (on the road from Phoenix) seems to lie between Death Valley in California and Jornada del Muerto, which is below Albuquerque in New Mexico. Phoenix itself seems to be the junction on the highway between two names of death. Near the junction of the highway that leads north to Albuquerque lie a town (hot spring) called Truth or Consequences and the White Sands Missile Testing Range. These

categorical essence and creates new life not death. As both Laure Angstelle and Maude Laures repeat, “Il ne faut pas qu’Albuquerque explose dans ma tête” (32, 202) / “Albuquerque must not explode in my head” (30, 186). The vitalism and alterity of nature (corporeality or landscape as territorial location) must not disappear. “Albuquerque” (L. *albus*, ‘white’), or *la scène blanche* in which words lose connection with originary truth, must not explode into the death of a completely disembodied language. As Mélanie says, “Oui, il me fallait un corps devant l’impensable” (207) / “Yes, I needed a body to face the unthinkable” (189). Without such recognition of deconstructive difference, we may muse, as Katharine Conley does in a note appended to her analysis of the folding together of inside and outside, “Is it she [Mélanie] . . . who commits the murder of Angela Parkins, the woman with whom she appears to be infatuated?” (158n.12). If the female body is relegated to a pre-linguistic, pre-social space, the feminine is eradicated within what Irigaray terms the “hom(m)osexuality” of desire and subjectivity in a between-men linguistic economy of the subject (*Speculum* 98-104). Laures’s translation of L’homme long into “l’hom’oblong” (l’homo blond)⁶ emphasizes the symbolic murder of female difference with the evacuation of sense from the body: “*La mort / Je / suis / la mort — Je suis un enfant d’chienne. L’hom’oblong s’endort, une petite tombe calculée comme une forme explosive dans son corps*” (187) / “*Death / I / am death — I’m a sonofabitch.*

two names connect the blinding white light of the man-made nuclear explosion with the blinding light of truth/God as the fictional residue of origin.

⁶The “blond” wood of the dance floor (220/202) where Angela is murdered also supports the connection between the name L’hom’oblong and white Eurocentric theory.

O'blongman falls asleep, a little grave calculated like an explosive shape in his body" (173). By equating the body with the unspeaking, a-social, body of the mother who becomes the feminine tomb ("une petite tombe calculée"), the dead nonsubject of unthinking nature, Laures exposes the calculated embodiment of a white, Eurocentric, masculinist, and deconstructive theory in L'homo blond (blond, male homosocial theory).

Contrarily, Parker argues, Brossard eroticizes the gap between the inside (Foucauldian technologies of gender that discipline our bodies) and the outside (history that excludes women) in the words "*fentes* or *vfentres*" (223). Fusing the words *ventre* [womb, stomach] and *fentes* [fissures, slits, holes], Brossard brings together plenitude (womb) and absence (holes) and reworks from an embodied, feminist angle the Derridean concept of invagination as the folding together of inside and outside that constructs the fictional effect of the real. Brossard refuses the negative evacuation of corporeality outside language in the theory of the death of the subject for a vital cortex of fusion that not only admits the possibility of something unknown and outside discourse but also brings it within by conflating the opposition of plenitude and absence in the "*vfentres*" (womb-holes) that are haunted by a corporeal and discursive fullness. In this vital cortex, Brossard opens a space for feminist negotiation in the exploration of the social and linguistic contract between languages and women in Québec (Maude Laures) and the United States (Laure Angstelle).

Is there an outside? Alternative perspectives inscribed by utopian feminisms often rely on some kind of outside, which has been criticized as essentialist by poststructuralist feminists. Is the residual effect of an outside constructed in discourse an essentialist

reversal of the binary? Derrida's famous line, "Il n'y a pas de hors-texte" / "There is nothing outside of the text" (*Of Grammatology* 158), has largely informed the mainstream of feminist deconstruction that continues to discuss the split between the unknowable real and the violent formation of the subject upon entry into social and symbolic regulation. Yet, as Barbara Godard writes, Brossard's poetic theory is also informed by "fellow deconstructionist, Gilles Deleuze" (preface, *These Our Mothers* [7]). In Deleuze and Guattari's anti-psychoanalytic, anti-depth theory, the absence of coherent or systemic organization in the nomadic body without organs insists there is an outside, and it is vast. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari write: "What is important is not whether the flows are 'One or multiple' — we're past that point: there is a collective assemblage of enunciation, a machinic assemblage of desire, one inside the other and both plugged into an immense outside that is a multiplicity in any case" (23). Language and desire, they argue, are constructed systems that fold together, but they connect with the real on the level of matter that is outside systemic organization. Brossard writes of her fascination with "l'immensité de l'espace" et "le versant inédit" / "the immensity of space" and "uncharted side" of language (*She Would Be* 8, 9) where the coded and uncoded aspects of an embodied language meet. As Laures's Mélanie says, ". . . la réalité œuvrait sans mandat dans le volume du corps pensant" (207) / ". . . reality was operating without a mandate in the thinking body's volume" (189). Corporeality and thought fold together as in a Möbius strip, where the beginning of one is inseparable from the end of the other.

Deleuze and Guattari refuse the depth and separation that Lacan says forms the

dialectical movement of desire between a displaced 'real' and its symbolic representation. Instead, Deleuze and Guattari argue, the development of the Oedipal subject through repression, taboo, and the threat of castration reveals the subjugation of individual fantasy to social regulation (*Anti-Oedipus* 62). Desire, they suggest, is the molecular attraction and repulsion between organized and disorganized, coded and uncoded, material surfaces with no original depth or interiority. Rather than contrast the uncoded sense of Freud's theory of polymorphous perversity or Kristeva's theory of chaotic indistinguishability with the coded sense of a subject formed in a regulatory language, Deleuze and Guattari contrast nomadic "smooth" and uncoded spaces with sedentary "striated" and coded spaces. Smooth space is not prior to organized space. Nor is the one outside the other. They constantly interrupt each other and rhizomatically derail definition: "smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space" (*Thousand Plateaus* 474). In the holes and contra-dictions that open in Brossard's language, the striated spaces of multiple languages (the symbolic) become deregulated smooth spaces that allow "an infinite succession of linkages and changes in direction" (*Thousand Plateaus* 494). Smooth space in the symbolic is not just the rhythm or voice of the body but also the derailment of meaning in language itself that opens a deregulated space in which corporeality can speak in Brossard's text.

This shifting between inside and outside characterizes Brossard's intervention into utopianism. Conventionally, utopianism is defined as an ideal world that does not exist, a view from outside (by marginalized citizens) of what would constitute a better world than

the current socially and politically oppressive regimes. This outside, for Deleuze and Guattari, is the nomadic war machine, that, when appropriated by any system (be it Oedipal or state regulation), “undergoes a metamorphosis, affirms its irreducibility and exteriority” (*Thousand Plateaus* 356), and remains a “free energy capable of fueling a revolutionary machine” (*Anti-Oedipus* 293). In *Le désert mauve*, Brossard inscribes textual and corporeal bodies that are neither completely inside nor outside the social and linguistic codes of phallogocentrism. The slippage between inside and outside in the charged particles and “vfentres” of language enables her to write a lesbian interlanguage as a “quantum” movement of probable, “random, spontaneous, discontinuous . . . reversible and synchronous” lesbian desire and becomings, as Godard describes in “Producing Visibility for Lesbians: Nicole Brossard’s Quantum Poetics” (133). Some outside needs to be configured. As Parker insists, “Neither the gun behind the bar nor the one in the glove compartment will protect Mélanie from the ‘profil sanglant’ [bloody profile] of homophobia and misogyny, figured by the apparently innocuous scientist . . .” (132). The bar of phallogocentrism (the violent separation between origin and language) cannot change anything. Yet, in Brossard’s novel, “le revolver” (the gun) cannot be contained inside as the Lacanian bar of the phallus/gun. Toward the end of the process set in motion by the translation notes that include the juxtaposition of sections entitled “Le revolver” and “Le bar” (79-83), Maude Laures confronts the mirror of the organized linguistic subject (“retourna devant le miroir”) in a spinning “délire” that associates “revolver” (to turn, to spin, gun) with “se revolter” (to revolt; 170). Her revolution in language begins with the decoded flows of an embodied language that leap into the

paralogical proliferation of feminist deconstructive mutations that deny the organization of the subject through language by exposing the disorganization of language itself and revealing the fallacy of the phallus that controls knowledge and subjectivity by defining the body as unconscious, internal depth that is unknowable and outside language.

Angstelle writes of Mélanie's preoccupation with "mon corps virtuel" (21) / "my virtual body" (20), and Laures writes of her similar desire to find a place with no solid location, a utopian no place where "je m'abandonnais à tous les éclairs comme s'il s'agissait dans la chair d'être liée momentanément au bruit que font les neurones devant l'immensité" (190) / "I would surrender to all the flashes of lightning as though it were a matter for the flesh of being momentarily linked to the noise neurons make when faced with immensity" (176). Brossard's figure of the cortex or virtual body is both the inseparable continuum between body and text that Elizabeth Grosz figures as "the passage, vector, or uncontrollable drift of the inside to the outside" in a Möbius strip (*Volatile Bodies* xii) and that which holds possibilities for flight and potential for brief new creations, as Godard writes ("Producing Visibility" 131), echoing Deleuze's sense of a becoming between two things that changes the original. Lorraine Weir reads this third movement of deconstruction that opens between the binaries through Brossard's use of the laser beam as the "source" of light creates "a three-dimensional optical illusion" that displaces the binary opposition (349). Corporeality is not pre-linguistic. Parker outlines tribadic inscription that ties, rather than separates, lesbian bodies with language:

Lesbian emotions and knowledge are patterned on our skin, substituting in relation to our polysemic lips a continuum rather than a difference. This is where

“the tongue finds an opening,” in the body, in the language, encoding the *jouissance* of the tribe of “tribades” as lesbians were known in France before the twentieth century . . . rubbing against each other. . . . The extended analogy between writing and lesbian lovemaking displaces boundaries between discourses that ground eroticism and textuality, allowing the lips, the tongue and the skin to function as relays. (100)

Even the lesbian configuration of “desiring writing” as the tongue that rubs between corporeality and language has no essential source in original bodies. Instead, “desiring writing” arises in the utopic possibility of becoming between the two.

Brossard mines the site of the utopian no-place (Gk. *ou* ‘not’ + *top-os* ‘place,’ *OED*) as a figure for the discursive embodiment of lesbian desiring production that cannot be categorically represented through certain political or theoretical positions, or through a divisive focus on body or language, but emerges as an inclusive and fictional holograph of “l’essentielle”⁷ that takes shape in the spaces between specific figurations. As Jagose succinctly states in her chapter title, the slogan of 1980s identity politics (lesbians are everywhere) modulates into the deconstructive “Lesbians Are Elsewhere” (1). For Brossard, this is not a free-floating space that has no contextual location but an emergent nonfoundational space that refuses the controlling gaze that specifies foundational unity. The figuration of a lesbian “elsewhere” makes sense, Jagose argues, because the category of lesbian “been more problematically indeterminate” than the

⁷Because L’Essentielle is also the name of a feminist bookstore in Montréal, the connection between bodies and language is inescapable in this figuration.

category of women because of the difficulty of fixing a sexual object choice (Jagose 13). Further, Terry Castle argues, lesbian love has been “a sort of juridical phantasm” that could not be spoken during the establishment of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century antihomosexual laws in Europe (6). In *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture*, Castle suggests that this juridical absence, combined with the invisibility of lesbian specificity in theories of early romantic female friendship, contemporary feminist metaphors of mother-daughter bonding, the emphasis on masculinist AIDs discourse in contemporary gay theory, and general avoidance of lesbians in contemporary queer theory, constructs the “ghostly” effect of the lesbian figure in modern artistic production. She writes, “Used imaginatively — repossessed, so to speak — the very trope that evaporates can also solidify. In the strangest turn of all, perhaps, the lesbian body itself returns: and the feeble, elegiac waving off — the gesture of would-be exorcism — becomes instead a new and passionate beckoning” (Castle 46-47). Brossard’s holographic “l’essentielle” deploys the apparitional return of a lesbian body in its categorical absence as an opening to a nonfoundational yet affirmative feminist politics. This apparitional holograph is not the production of juridical or discursive absence but a proliferation of lesbian presences that cannot simultaneously be figured with a solid body.

While Jagose criticizes that Brossard’s virtual holography relies on a lesbian angle of vision that reproduces the original lesbian body, she misses the point. Brossard’s utopic virtuality does not mark “a means to its end, the reinstallation of the actual female body” (56) because, although there is political and desiring direction, there is no end or

authenticity in the reading act that spirals in the “*délire*” of complexly interwoven contradiction. The holographic “*l’essentielle*” can only be a fiction formed by the abstract intersection of multiple, and at times incommensurable, figurations and positions. Brossard combines this holographic figure that is no (one) place with the deconstructive gap, hole, or abyss of a catachrestic erasure premised on multiple and changing figurations of a lesbian cortex (*corps/texte*) to develop an embodied lesbian writing as an affirmative deconstruction. Rather than foundering in the hole of absent foundations, the quantum particles of Brossard’s utopian desiring writing get excited in the “*vfentres*” (*ventre* ‘stomach,’ ‘womb’ + *fente* ‘crack,’ ‘fissure,’ ‘split,’ ‘slit,’ ‘hole’) (Parker) that open between multiple historical, corporeal, literary, theoretical, and fictional figurations of lesbian nonidentity, begin to circle new nuclei, and create virtual particles in a deregulated, lesbian body without organs.

Conventionally, the idea of utopian improvement inscribes a vertical axis, a hierarchical system of values, and a belief in the liberatory progression of human development. In the politics of feminist activism, Brossard inscribes the positive vertical axis of utopian valuation and hope for improvement and change beyond the current oppression of social and linguistic violence against women: “*L’humanité était fragile, gigantesque espoir suspendu au-dessus des villes*” (13) / “Humanity was fragile, a gigantic hope suspended over cities” (13). Such vertical alignment also pervades Mélanie’s desire for the blinding light of the sun that will illuminate the full body and provide the clarity of truth and full presence. Yet such alignment is always undercut by the violence of any specular gaze, especially *L’homme long*’s murderous gaze, that poses

the subject's separation from impossible origins and conquest of irreducible multiplicity.⁸ A gap opens between the vertical alignment of Brossard's utopian "l'essentielle" and the horizontal axis of a deconstruction that recognizes all valuation as a product of use-value, the social and economic coding of utility that is always limited to the blind spots and perspectives of the particular historical, geographical, economic, social, racial, and sexual conditions of the time and place. The utopian view in *Le désert mauve* that includes feminist hope for the revision of social and linguistic relations opens as an expanding horizon, a space between the horizontal and vertical inscriptions that in themselves are both too heavily encumbered and empty, too politically exclusive (hierarchical, vertical, exclusively contingent) and ineffective (the aporia where oppositions are valued equally on the horizontal axis). As Jeffrey T. Nealon argues in *Double Reading: Postmodernism after Deconstruction*, the negotiation that occurs in the specific textual space between binary oppositions is the deconstructive act of political intervention. The impasse, or aporia, arises from a simple reversal and displacement of the valorized category that results in a "recognition that all positive claims are doomed to failure; any claim for literal truth is bound to fall short because of its inherent figurality" (Nealon 32).

Brossard's negotiations open a space for lesbian desire, censor violence against women,

⁸Brossard writes of the fullness of dawn and hope for improvement within the framework of heroic physical and conceptual separation, conquest, mastery, and solidity that upholds normative patriarchal narratives of thought and literature. Maude Laures writes: "Je ne peux souscrire à «la fureur de l'aube». À mes yeux, l'aube se détache comme une image sur un fond d'humilité" (152) / "I cannot subscribe to 'the furor of dawn.' In my eyes dawns stands out like an image against a background of humility. A great calm, quiet certitude. Yes, quietude" (140).

yet leave open the description of any categories and truths to multiple inscriptions and contra-dictions.

Speaking of one side only of this vertical and horizontal utopic gap, Parker describes a curving time/space continuum that links past, present, and future. However, this homogeneous bridge through time inscribes only the vertical relation of a lesbian symbolic within the cortex of an embodied memory that assigns value:

. . . the body is also *cortex*, imbricated in the language that codes it and speaks (for) it. The skin is the mind, and mind is memory, for without memory we are estranged, incapable of assigning value to our lives. . . . A time/space curvature links memory to utopia: the continent, the island of our dreams joins past, present and future. (101)

This vertical link within the bodies and minds of women as social subjects rather than as inert matter ready for the impress of seminal meaning inscribes a unified continuity between past, present, and future rather than a separation between (unspeakable, embodied) origin and symbolic construction as (phallogocentric) speaking subjects. Homi Bhabha explains that such continuity between the past, present, and future provides the authority within the symbolic that enables a subject to speak.⁹ In Lucille Nelson's

⁹My reference to Bhabha may seem misleading, because, in *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha discusses the continuity between past and present as the interpellation of the people as "objects" of "a nationalist pedagogy," rather than as speaking subjects. In the double narrative of nation, Bhabha places the speaking subject in the heterogeneous and performative present "that must erase any prior or originary presence . . ." (145). Because my argument focuses on the development of a speaking subject within the symbolic of a language that is not necessarily phallogocentric, I place the "origin" or "l'essentielle" of a speaking lesbian subject (not object) and lesbian desire within the continuity of past,

translation of the paper Brossard presented at the Third International Book Fair in Montréal,¹⁰ Brossard says, “To enter the time of image and legend is to enter the questioning of identity, finding the reference that makes sense,” changes our lives, and provides presence in the present (“Memory: Hologram of Desire” 45). Continuity within the time-line of memory enables the subject who has been contained as an object within “the imaginary and language” of the symbolic, which is really only “the image of man” and “patriarchal memory” (“Memory: Hologram of Desire” 44), to become a speaking subject. Mélanie’s tattoo, an inscription of her bodily surfaces, figures the enigma of human life as a changing materiality, a series of becomings that cannot be answered and reduced to the word “Man”: a death’s-head moth, Mona Lisa, Medusa, the Sphinx, dragon. The tattoo forms “une impression” of death when read within the Oedipal plot in which the Sphinx was forced to choose death as the separation of absolute otherness: “tête de mort” (78) / “death’s head” (74). However, the inscription also traces the presence of female figures in the symbolic, not as unspeaking absent origins of truth, but as mothers of a heterogeneous speech that has been reduced to the monological binary of phallogocentrism.

Of course, Bhabha’s argument hinges on the impossibility of a homogeneous

present, and future, before the irreducible heterogeneity of the present speaking lesbian subject can be performed.

¹⁰Brossard held the position of president at this infamous book fair (14-22 June 1988) that necessarily raised numerous issues of exclusionary practices and appropriation in feminist writing and theory in an attempt to address women’s writing across cultural differences without reduction.

continuity between past and present narratives, between the accumulation of a vertical, chronological time and the dispersement of a horizontal, performative present. In *Le désert mauve*, the horizontal axis of utopia as no place opens as quantum leaps between the momentary virtual presences of particular locations. The inscription of Mélanie's skin is not simply the homogeneous identity of a female past and present that would contain and inscribe death. As Bhabha insists, the present speaking subject must "erase any prior or originary presence . . . to demonstrate the prodigious, living principles of . . . the present . . ." (*The Location of Culture* 145). The tattoo is part of a linguistic chain of continuous becomings and flights of escape. As Karen Gould argues, the Sphinx in Brossard's *Picture Theory* is only the departure point for the character's preoccupation "with her own enigma, with the puzzling difficulty of writing and reading 'woman' in the extreme fullness of her possibilities — without reducing her to any riddle that might be too easily solved at the expense, perhaps, of her life" (*Writing in the Feminine* 87). As part of a linguistic chain that forms "l'essentielle," the Sphinx tattoo is a molecular component, a minimal strategic location that will enable what has been constructed as unspeakable (lesbian subjectivity and desire) to become readable. Yet a molecular component is never a solid object. In the quantum dynamics of the text, the virtu-elle Sphinx, that disappears under erasure yet leaves traces of her origin, is an event in a rhizomatic chain of linguistic reactions and becomings rather than a stable substance that commodifies or exclusively defines.¹¹

¹¹The commodification of the figure of the lesbian or of lesbian desire has become a major issue in postmodern lesbian or queer studies. Contesting identificatory categories

as Foucauldian stumbling blocks in the disciplinary control and construction of the subject, Judith Butler writes that not only is homosexual discourse a product of homophobia but also,

. . . if the category were to offer no trouble, it would cease to be interesting to me: it is precisely the *pleasure* produced by the instability of those categories which sustains the various erotic practices that make me a candidate for the category to begin with. To install myself within the terms of an identity category would be to turn against the sexuality that the category purports to describe . . . to control the very eroticism that it claims to describe and authorize, much less “liberate.” (“Imitation and Gender Subordination” 14)

Following Butler’s use of the radical Barthesian pleasure of the text that is produced in the slippery escape of the signifier from any singular signified, Robyn Wiegman affirms Butler’s argument, quoting from this passage and noting that such differences as race and class cannot be addressed by the categorical term *lesbian*. Further, Wiegman argues, “. . . the commodification of the lesbian as a category of identity is often what passes, inside and outside the lesbian community, for evidence of political progress” and the growing “political power” of lesbians as evidenced by the burgeoning merchants’ area at the Michigan Women’s Music Festival (3). For Wiegman, this resistance to commodification necessarily means dismantling utopian politics: “The negotiation of our critical currency demands instead the transformation of political engagement from the utopic project of being (or ascribing being to the) lesbian to another kind of engagement, something quite different, quite potentially other” (5). Not only is the loss of hope for political and erotic coalition lost in the growing queer version of anti-commodification, but even the politically effective and erotically supportive ability to name difference disappears. Wiegman concludes her article with the hypercritical statement: “. . . the lesbian postmodern . . . [proclaims]: not just that the lesbian is ‘not a woman’ but the lesbian is not — cannot continue to be — ‘the lesbian’ either” (16). While Wiegman is a scholar of cultural rather than literary studies, I am perturbed by her non-scholarly lack of fidelity to the erotic slipperiness and insubstantiality of the substantive (noun) insisted upon by the deconstructionists from which she departs. Brossard’s horizontal, polyvocal, and heterogenous utopian desire as the energy of connection across differences escapes both the criticism of categorical commodification and the narrative of improvement proposed by Butler and Wiegman, yet maintains political and erotic specificity — enables the Wildean “love that dare not speak its name” — to speak. In *Domain-Matrix*, Sue-Ellen Case is appalled by the way detractors such as Wiegman close the discussion about lesbian feminist coalitions such as the Combahee River Collective that actively include difference by claiming they focus on identity politics. Further, Case argues, the notion of an “unassimilated otherness” may actually commodify individuals within a postmodern globalism rather than resist commodification. By erasing the tensions of difference, a postmodern commodification may “free up individuals from exclusionary communities in order to assimilate them back into the dominant structures, for there is no ‘empty’ social

In *Le désert mauve*, the utopic energy of lesbian “desiring writing” shifts the meaning from *utopia* as the already textually embodied ‘no place’ of lesbian desire that Castle describes to *utopia* as the site of energy attraction and repulsion between molecules and particles, the physical life force of creation, desire itself. Lesbian attraction cannot be pinned in any singular location but occurs as an event in the same way that virtual particles in physics appear on the event-horizon with no substantial origin. Godard writes,

Quantum moves are made through probability waves that are temporary feelers put out toward stability. . . . These are “virtual transitions” that become real transitions under specific conditions. Among the many possible mutations only one gets actualized in a particular instance of interference. None of the potentials is lost, however. (“Producing Visibility” 133)

On the virtu-elle event-horizon, a rhizomatic chain of reactions connect the metaphoric Mauve Motel of transitory, dynamic, and heterogenous lesbian occupation with metaphoric wings, rebirth, and lines of flight that escape any proper representation. This drift away from categorical inscription includes the inability to position a lesbian “desiring writing” firmly in language or corporeality. I will expand upon this in my

space”:

Inherent, then, in the charge of ‘presence’ and the deconstruction of community and identity is the historical position of the postmodern critic in the 1980s who, to secure access to alternative positions, would move heterogeneity either into the internal arena of the individual, where one may move among a variety of positions within oneself, or into something like an ‘unassimilated otherness.’ The first solution reinstates traditional capitalist models, and the latter seems a kind of putting away of any hope for collective processes. (*Domain-Matrix* 157)

distinction between the tool and the weapon in “Translation, the Loving War Machine of ‘Délire,’ and Intersubjectivity at the ‘Speed of Light.’” However, the intense drift between particles that change substance means that language and corporeality meet in a place between the two where neither colonizes the other. Both the phallogocentrically inscribed ‘real’ (the unknowable body of the transcendental signified) and symbolic (signifier) become something else as they move on and between the rhizomatic surfaces of language where the conventional meanings of *tenor* (signified) and *vehicle* (signifier) cross, shift gears in “drague,” and multiply. There is no real, signified tenor: Angela watches a ballet, not an opera, at the Armagosa Opera House. As the vehicle becomes the absence of the sign of the tenor (tied to the representational meaning of a man singing in a high range) expected at the Armagosa Opera House, the hom(m)o-social economy of language disappears. But the result is not a Deleuzian “becoming woman” or the Derridean masquerade that reveals the negative truth of untruth. Angela watches a woman transforming between the feminine drag of a ballerina and a lesbian in the habit of “son jean et ses bottes en peau de serpent” (101) / “her jeans and snakeskin boots” (94). The vehicle becomes the sign of female bodies in performance. The corporeal sign is not the unspeakable, animal body of phallogocentrism but the speaking and spectating bodies of dangerous animals crossing a gendered language and subverting a heterosexual Christian logos so that she cannot be recuperated into the mute, feminine sign of property. The speaking bodies affirmatively make a new kind of animal.

In relation to the nonfoundational lesbian angle of vision that Brossard develops, Parker begins to outline the material chain of language that connects between points but

neglects the breadth of Brossard's linguistic transit that constructs a lesbian "interlanguage" or event-horizon of rhizomatic translation without fidelity across systems. The potential new beginning suggested by the *A*-shape of the motel links with the inscription of Mélanie "at the beginning of her life as a woman" (Parker 137). Combined with the material recurrence of *A* in the fictionalized textual bodies of the publishers, "the Arroyo Press and Angle Press, . . . the 'auteure' [author] of the first version, Laure Angstelle, . . . [and] Mélanie's lover, Angela Parkins," Parker suggests that the motel becomes "a significant point in the desert (*le désir*) from which a paradigmatic *angle* may be plotted" (137). But Brossard's chain that inscribes the utopian hope for a lesbian "desiring writing" that cannot represent a subject or position because it would exclude differences becomes much more decentred and more rhizomatic than this.

The vehicle of lesbian aerial flight (the Meteor) moves outside any singular tenor (horizon of meaning) and becomes the multiple event-horizons of multi-dimensional interlingual, intersemiotic, and intertextual interactions that create an unfixed lesbian desiring attraction. What Kristeva calls the bodily drive of the *chora* becomes the deregulated vehicles (signifiers) among the material surfaces of bodies and languages (signs) that drive the production of sense. No longer the property of an originary or singular subject, the sign of the Meteor from the Mauve Motel resonates in sound, abstract meaning, and intensive movement with Marielle's *la Mauve* from Brossard's *French Kiss*. As the two "kiss" and interrupt each other, they mingle and form an intercortex(t)ual connection (between texts and bodies) in a mobile lesbian interlanguage. In *French Kiss*, Brossard's Marielle drives "her old Plymouth, 'la Mauve,' back and forth

... exploring body and city, inner and outer space” (Forsyth, “The Novels of Nicole Brossard” 37), island and mainland, creating a desiring space of renewal within the “city,” previously weighted with the arid “fragmentation,” “violence, repression and destruction” of the phallogocentric symbolic (Forsyth, “Deconstructing Formal Space” 341-42). The Mauve Motel and “la Mauve” also connect with the “MAU”/maw/mot of a chaotic opening of language in “la bouche au féminin” in Brossard’s poem *Mauve*. These intertextual connections to Brossard’s other works leap between words with no proper organizing tenor or vehicle, except, perhaps, the mauve mot that comes under erasure with the Meteor’s more tenuous connection to colour.

Within the text, the rhizomatic chain brushes against and temporarily intersects disconnected linguistic materials and concepts. A noisy, rhizomatic opera begins to sound between Laure Angstelle’s original novel, Maude Laures’s “extratextual” translator’s notes (that are not only part of the text but form the central fold of the novel between inner and outer), and Maude Laures’s translation. Such rhizomatic multiplicity begins to open lines of transit for a lesbian interlanguage that translates without fidelity across linguistic and conceptual materials of language. Yet, without the organizing material linkage of the letter ‘A,’ the lesbian interlanguage destabilizes from an organized lesbian angle of vision. Symbolic organization through a passionate rebirth of the Phoenix in the abject myth of lack, love, and loss is deserted. “Phoenix” is cited as the meaningless proper name of a city in the patriarchal, symbolic desert that maps the location of desire and movement on a striated grid. Yet the idea of new life returns under erasure as the material roof and sign of the mauve motel abstract “Phoenix” into a virtual element that

flashes and briefly appears between the intersection of the proper name and the proper myth and derails both from their original breast-piercing and, consequently, deserted geographical locations of a desire based on a violent separation of language and the 'real.' Maude Laures leaps from the geographical proper name Phoenix into the metaphorical impropriety of flight and rebirth in the material motel: "Lorsqu'on arrive par la route de Phoenix, c'est le premier motel sur la gauche avec un toit métallique qui aveugle un instant et un néon MOTEL *Mauve* qui fait penser à un oiseau sur le point de s'envoler" (69) / "When arriving by the Phoenix road, it is the first motel on the left with a momentarily blinding metallic roof and a *Mauve* MOTEL neon that resembles a bird about to take flight" (65). This flash of transit enabled by the deterritorialized sign creates a "desiring language" that exists as a virtual element: a transitory formation of another idea, another material, within 'real' of language. Brossard argues that four movements in the time-space of writing enable the emergence of feminine content: "a) mouvement occillatoire qui manifeste une ambivalence; b) mouvement répétitif comme pour exorciser la voix patriarcale; c) mouvement spiralé qui sert à conquérir graduellement l'espace; d) mouvement de flottement où la pensée est suspendue au-dessus du vide" (*La lettre aérienne* 72) / "a) oscillating movement, which manifests a certain ambivalence; b) repetitive movement, as if to exorcise the patriarchal voice; c) spiraling movement, which serves to gradually conquer the territory concerned; and d) floating movement, where thought is suspended over the void" (*Aerial Letter* 92). In an accumulation of these movements together, "Phoenix" flashes a deterritorialized rebirth. Such unorganized and chaotic transit between sign and abstract thought without fidelity to their originary

representations occurs as a rhizomatic interruption of the one into the other on the surfaces, not depths, of abstract and material sense in language that reshapes the original direction and begins to make new sense. In Brossard's aerial theory, it floats meaning and creates an interlanguage that hovers between the borders of heterogenous meanings already inscribed in language to create lesbian desiring direction without foreclosing meaning.

The metallic winged motel that is becoming-bird and becoming-mythology connects with the wings of Mélanie's mother's car that is in the process of becoming-flower: "Sa carrosserie, ailée à l'arrière, se transforme. . . . Le pare-chocs reflète . . . le rouge de la fleur [d'un cactus], surtout dont la forme contiguë à une tache de rouille s'effiloche, rubigineuse" (73) / "Its metal body, winged in the rear, . . . turns. . . . The bumper sends back . . . the red of its [cactus] flower whose shape close to a rust spot is fraying, rubiginous" (69). The winged metaphor sprouts in Angela's aerial language that "voltige et plane éperdument" (49) / "flutters and wildly soars" (45), Kathy and Lorna's "présence ailée" (40) / "winged presence" (36), and the "corps ailé" (194) / "winged body" of Lorna teaching Mélanie how to become-dragon through a process of becoming-dolphin and becoming-horse (194 / 178). The car, as a vehicle of flight, a metaphor of lesbian "desiring writing" in transit between bodies of language and signs of bodies, also becomes-dragon: "dragon parmi les dragons, elle rugisse au cœur de la «drague» vertigineuse" (74) / "dragon among dragons, it roars in the heart of the heady 'cruising'" (70). In the play between languages, parodic lesbian "drag" appears as a virtual particle produced by the material particles of sound in language. As vehicle challenging vehicle,

and as lesbian performance within the symbolic, drag briefly flashes and disappears, only to recur again, this time reified, in abstract thought in the scene at the Armagosa Opera House (see above). These winged metaphors (vehicles), that are the ‘angels’/angles (Angela) of language,¹² connect the radically diverse explosion of subjects and objects in a quantum becoming present of lesbian “desiring writing.”

The “impression” of the tattoo as death’s-head “papillion” / “butterfly,” Mona Lisa, Sphinx, “serpents ou spirales” / “snakes or spirals” inscribed on “«esprits libres» de la région” / “‘free spirits’ in the region” by a woman who metamorphosizes women’s bodies “en oiseau, en crâne, en navire, en dragon ou en fleur” / into “bird, skull, ship, dragon or flower” (77, 78 / 73, 74) connect the wings of flight to the lore (Laure/Laures) of mythical female origins.¹³ The blinding flash of light from the motel sign materializes the surface connection of signs with the textual conception of full presence in the blinding light of Dante’s Beatrice who appears in *Paradise*, the utopic volume of the divine trilogy.¹⁴ Logos, then, is not fathered by the truth of God’s intent but fictionally mothered by Beatrice and the angel who guides the author into the quantum materials of a vital,

¹²In her *In Another Place, Not Here*, Brand calls such virtual production that inscribes new sense in language “grace.”

¹³In *Le désert mauve*, Brossard also alludes to other female figures of classical myth. For example, Kathy Kerouac’s voice “dissipait toute arrogance, toute colère comme un chant de sirènes” (97) / “dissipated any arrogance, any anger like a siren’s song” (90).

¹⁴Intertextual allusions are also made to the two other volumes of Dante’s trilogy, *Hell* and *Purgatory* in other parts of the texts. Of special importance is Brossard’s conversion of the “flakes of fire” that torture the sexual perverts in hell to the epiphanic fire of speaking in tongues.

embodied language. Twisting the source of light into fiction and the flash of disorganized, virtual particles (angels/angles) in language that produce new sense qualifies the linguistic link between Angela and the angelus (a hymn of praise for Mary's conception of the Word said at dawn, noon, and sunset). Brossard resists religious doctrine, and her abstract allusion to Mary via Angela's figural allusion to Dante's Beatrice (who becomes Mary), is no simple inversion of the phallogocentric gender of truth. The doctrine of Mary's conception of the Word takes flight as the angel of the Lord becomes the angels of virtual presence on the surfaces of a decoded and deregulated language. The angels of the lore/Laure(s) twist female 'conception' of the word into an idea about the constitution of language itself. This is not simply a new beginning, or a return to original essence. Instead, a series of new becomings and linguistic events take aerial flight in the transit between systems and inscriptions. A becoming-lesbian of the text appears in the fluid vehicle of "drag," torsion, and performance in the creative "pool" of language that links the disparate natural elements of "papillon ou dauphin" / "butterfly or dolphin" in the impure and humanly inflected "l'eau chlorée" / "chlorinated water" (93 / 87) and pushes the contamination of nature to the productive thresholds of an embodied language.

The horizontal jouissance on the surfaces of language, in this transit without fidelity between linguistic and philosophic systems, between classical, Renaissance,¹⁵ and

¹⁵Dante (1265-1321) and Petrarch wrote during the Italian Renaissance and connect, as well, to the figural incorporation of Roman Catholic belief in Mary in literature. The elevation of Petrarch's beloved and departed Laura in his sonnets depends, in part, on the figure of Mary.

contemporary feminist figures and writing, between Roman Catholic and animistic allusions, embodies what Bhabha calls the “sign’s seizure/caesura of symbolic synchronicity” (193). The death-dealing evil-eye of Medusa, as Bhabha writes, “is differential and strategic rather than originary, ambivalent rather than accumulative” (55-56). It “inscribes a timelessness, or a freezing of time . . . that can only be represented in the destruction of the *depth* associated with the sign of symbolic consciousness” (53). Brossard seizes the time-line and immerses us between the present and the continuous past that is always rewritten in the present in order to interrogate language, character, writing, reading, and subjectivity. As Parker writes, “Writing permits the transgressive (woman/queer) writer to open spaces in the language, in the symbolic and imaginary registers, which Brossard calls *delays* or *relays* which are translated in the text by figures” (38). Rather than upholding the continuity of past, present, and future, Brossard’s seizure of time reveals the heterogeneous differences always already within the destabilized surfaces of language that enable her to inscribe a lesbian “desiring writing.”

In Laures’s utopian projection of hope into the future, what is to come can never be known in advance because there is no continuous system to determine the outcome. The past, the original text of Laure Angstelle, also changes with Maude Laures’s later reading and inscription. The substance/force of the ‘original’ mother herself, Kathy (or Angstelle), is the mobility and multiple connections of language. Angstelle writes, “Ce même mois, ma mère fut triste et Lorna comme ma mère” (27) / “That same month my mother was sad and Lorna like my mother” (24). Laures radically alters the seemingly obvious meaning of pervasive gloom in her translation by reading from a different angle

of vision that aligns the comparison “comme” not with “triste” but with “mère”: “Ce même mois ma mère fut triste et Lorna fut douce envers moi” (197) / “That same month my mother was sad and Lorna gentle with me” (180). The translation does not inscribe the movement from original to target text as clarification or fidelity, but opens a horizon of possibilities and an intersubjectivity somewhere else, somewhere between, and therefore also outside or beyond, these two particular angles of vision. The holographic otherness of a nonfoundational lesbian interlanguage forms as a series of potential meanings in the quantum space of probable interconnections in the doubly tridimensional relation between writer, text, and reader on the one hand, and past, present, and future on the other.

As Barbara Havercroft argues, Brossard’s sense of movement in time-space destroys the binary tie to origin (28) and establishes “une généalogie au féminin” that moves between heterogeneous elements within the past, present, and future and creates “une subjectivité au féminin en mouvement . . . [et] une identité qui dépasserait le binarisme pour s’épanouir dans une tridimensionnalité” (29). This mobile heterogeneity, that juxtaposes the speaking subject with the voices that surround her, Havercroft argues, “exprime une pluralité de féminismes, au lieu d’une seule vision univoque et fixe” (30). On the levelled horizon of *Le désert mauve*, strategic figurations and gazes shift rapidly without hierarchical valuation and embody what Butler calls the nonexclusionary practice of “antifoundationalist . . . coalition politics” which “assumes neither that ‘identity’ is a premise nor that the shape or meaning of a coalitional assemblage can be known prior to its achievement” (*Gender Trouble* 15).

Brossard's nonfoundational, utopic configuration of heterogeneous production is one of continuous change. In Angstelle's text, Mélanie despairs about the patriarchal violence that continues to exclude her as a subject: "Je roulais vite, seule comme un personnage émondé de l'histoire. Je disais «tant de fois j'ai sombré dans l'avenir»" (13) / "I was driving fast, alone like a character cut out of history. Saying, 'so many times I have sunk into the future'" (13). Yet the text of despair can be read as hope displaced into a future that can never be known in advance. In Laures's spiralling return that dislocates time and any sense of an inevitable progression, she translates it as a contradiction between despair, about a homogeneous utopian projection, and hope, in a possible nonfoundational and changeable future generated by the speed of the present that is cut loose from the history of the subject and floating over a void: "Je roulais vite, émondée de l'histoire, silence torride. Je répétais «tant de fois j'ai abouti dans l'utopie»" (183) / "I was driving fast, cut off from history, torrid silence. Repeating 'so many times I have ended up in utopia'" (169). Laures enacts the unknown future potential in the speed that drives Mélanie's shifting tenors and vehicles of language. As Brossard writes in "Les pas juxtaposés du désir," hope for regeneration will come from "[le] féminin qui génère de l'imaginaire au cœur du temps long que constitue ce creux tridimensionnel" [feminine work on the imaginary in the tridimensional crux of endless time] (30). The vital proliferation of heterogeneity on the surfaces of language emptied of the subject radically opposes this nonfoundational space to L'homme long's death-dealing gaze. Brossard's shifting gaze opens the horizon with an uncontainable number of inscriptions, while L'homme long's possession of the gaze that kills Angela closes the horizon with the

annihilation of possible alternative speech acts that may supersede his own. The enforced silence of a death supports the absence of anything important (real) outside (himself or his view of the world).

The shifting gaze between incommensurable elements on the horizontal and vertical axes of the horizon does not propose an ideal vision. Various historical inscriptions of lesbian desire exist co-extensively, even within one character. Lorna's muscular body, her corporeal physicality, her work as a mechanic, and her "rude et impensable" / "rough and unthinkable" words (12) construct her as a butch-figure represented not only in contemporary American theory of parodic drag but also historically in much anglophone lesbian writing,¹⁶ the North American butch/femme figuration of lesbianism in the 1950s-1960s, the European cross-dressing in the French salons of Natalie Barney, as well as the Bataillian sense of the heterogeneous and physical elements that cannot be assimilated into the codes of society.¹⁷ Lorna's series of animistic becomings also relate her physicality to molecular becoming-animal in the theory of Deleuze and Guattari. When Lorna speaks with Kathy, their mouths would form

¹⁶For some examples of parodic drag in contemporary American theory, see Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* and Sue-Ellen Case's "Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic." Some examples of historic anglophone literary representation of the butch figure include such diverse figures as Stephen Gordon in Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, Orlando in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, Rosalind in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, and Jim in Willa Cather's *My Ántonia*.

¹⁷Cross-gendered performance, as well as the idea of a "rough and unthinkable" corporeality, links to Georges Bataille's discussion the profane refuse of the body as that which cannot be coded by the terms of social homogeneity (*Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-1939*).

m's,¹⁸ which suggests a connexion to Irigaray's French-feminist theory of a fluid, uncontainable, and embodied feminine speech between lips without the phallogocentric solidity, mastery, and separation of body and language. A French poststructuralist influence on Lorna's character (on her contextual impression) is also undeniable since her adjustment of the alternator on Kathy's car metaphorically changes the focus from the direct current of a psychoanalytic originary drive of the body to an alternating current of territorial materiality in corporeal and linguistic signs that drive a heterogeneous production of sense. She is the mechanic who teaches Mélanie how to read and write with the alternating current of uncontainable, differential angles that enable flight on the surfaces of language rather than through the essential depths of unspeakable knowledge.

Kathy's lesbian corporeality is inseparably linked to a heterogeneous desiring language. As part of a nonfoundational, holographic inclusiveness, her voice supports Kristeva's theory of the musicality of the *chora*, which is the original, embodied, and

¹⁸In *Sexes and Genealogies*, Irigaray writes,

The positive meaning of closed lips does not rule out singing or talking. It expresses a difference. Girls have less need to master the absence of the mother. But they may still choose to be silent and close the lips, keep the lips, the labials, as threshold to the mouth, the labials as opposed to the *dentals*, using the whole of the lips, and not just the corners, as in *fort-da*, *ici* or *la*. . . . The importance of the lips corresponds to that of the generation of the universe, but already in silence. Certain traditions, notably the tantric tradition, teach us this. These same traditions tell us that, to designate something that is not yet manifest, you should say *m*, keeping the lips closed in a hum. The word to designate mother often includes the letter *m*. In French, *maman* means, at least phonetically, that which is kept but which cannot be represented, expressed, mastered, that which suspends consumption but favors respiration, that which covers the whole with a vast blackness expressed by the *m* and potentially matches all colors thanks to the *a*. (100-01)

unsolidified sound and rhythm that wells into the conscious meaning of the symbolic:¹⁹

Parce que sa voix avait un tel effet sur les êtres, Kathy Kerouac ne prêtait pas toujours attention à ce qu'elle disait. Car pour elle le mérite des mots était de produire cette résonance qui au fond de la gorge lui faisait accorder les plus beaux instruments, entendre les musiques les plus lointaines. (96)

Given that her voice had such an effect on living beings, Kathy Kerouac did not always pay attention to what she said. Because for her the merit of words was in producing that resonance which deep in the throat had her tuning the most beautiful instruments, hearing the most faraway harmonies. (89)

Her voice forms a presence in musical sound that attacks the social coding of words and enables the production of different sense. Her relation with Lorna also embodies Kristeva's theory of lesbian desire as an indistinct and an-Oedipal (not quite Kristeva's pre-Oedipal formulation) interrelation between mother and daughter (My-her): Kathy's voice forms a "langage obscure qui la liait à Lorna Myher" (96) / "obscure language linking her to Lorna Myher" (89-90). Yet their language is not pre-Oedipal or pre-linguistic: it is textual and embodied. By telling Lorna that she must learn to read, the Sapphic representation of a seductive lesbian desire that spans an age-difference and

¹⁹In "Revolution in Poetic Language," Julia Kristeva argues that the *chora* cannot actually be spoken, because, given terms within the symbolic, it loses connection with origin and becomes separated in "the absence of an object and . . . the distinction between the real and the symbolic" (94). The *chora* can only exist in language as a welling up of the unconscious in "this space underlying the written [that] is rhythmic, unfettered, irreducible to its intelligible verbal translation; . . . [that] is musical, anterior to judgement, but restrained by [given meaning through] a single guarantee: syntax" (97).

suggests a teacher-student relationship²⁰ erases the homophobia of Kristeva's theory of the pre-Oedipal as the nonerotic merging of mother and daughter and specifies the *chora* in a relation of active lesbian desire.

As material presence, Kathy's voice — "sa «chose en or»" (95) / "her 'golden thing'" (89) — functions as a Derridean *pharmakon*, a cure for absence but also the poison of oblivion in the loss of objectified, solid meaning: Kathy "donnait à tous l'impression d'être une femme sans expression" (98) / "gave everyone the impression of being a woman without expression" (91). This inscription of the unspeakable raises Derrida's figuration of woman as the truth of untruth (and vice versa) in his *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles/Éperons: les styles de Nietzsche*. The "impression" also suggests the formation of character as the méconnaissance of the ego that gives itself away (as untruth) to reveal what it is not. This premise of absence contrasts with the insistence on presence in the materiality of her language in sound, on her lips, and in the body, which raises Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the location of language in the body without organs that has no ego boundaries, solidity, or self-containment (an-Oedipal) but is a shifting assemblage of partial presences: in Kathy, "Chaque vibration des cordes vocales donnait l'impression d'un son originé de bouches multiples" (95) / "Every vibration of

²⁰On the teacher-student and older-younger woman figuration of Sapphic writing, see Elaine Marks, "Lesbian Intertextuality." Like most of Brossard's texts, *Le désert mauve* is extremely difficult to analyze in the academic manner of analytical mastery and control. Because of the molecularity of Brossard's shifting angles, as soon as I posit one trait, I find myself contradicting myself. While I have been arguing that Lorna embodies a butch figure, which suggests activity rather than passivity, in the Sapphic relation of "des voix actives et passives" (96) / "active and passive voices" (90) between Lorna and Kathy, Lorna holds the passive position of silence.

the vocal chords gave the impression of a sound originated in multiple mouths” (89). The choric origin of the “voile de la voix” (95) / “voice’s veil” (89) shifts in meaning between the unspeakable *chora* of original presence, the méconnaissance of the divided linguistic subject, and the multiple choir of bodies and voices speaking together in contra-diction.

Mélanie, as a young woman who hates the sense of restriction that she sees in Kathy, her lesbian mother, clearly refuses lesbian desire as a mother-daughter bond. Yet she also contra-dicts this with the story that resonates with Kathy’s lesbian intercourse and pregnancy:

Nous étions, à ce que nos mères disaient, comme «de vraies sœurs». Ma mère m’avait tout raconté. «C’était par une belle nuit d’avril. Nous étions toutes deux enceintes, rondes, si tu nous avais vues, rondes et veloutées, mûres, à point comme des syllabes, tout en écho au sommet de Dante’s View. Si seulement, Mélanie, tu nous avais vues, mais la nuit.» (201)

We were, according to our mothers, like ‘real sisters.’ My mother had told me everything. ‘It happened one beautiful April night. We were both pregnant, round, if only you could have seen us, rounded and velvety, ripe, just right like syllables, echoing atop Dante’s View. If only, Mélanie, you had seen us, but the night.’
(185)

Mélanie’s multi-dimensional angles of vision, her exposure of the differential contra-diction of the inseparability and specificity of bodies and texts, her transit between the lesbian inscriptions in Kathy, Lorna, Angela, Laure, and Maude, all construct her (along

with Maude Laures²¹) as an intersubjective lesbian figuration of Deleuze and Guattari's masculinist body without organs and Irigaray's heterosexual feminist, anti-Oedipal, intersubjectivity that produces something new in the non-Hegelian meeting of differences. As Laures writes in her notes, Mélanie is "Rien de psychologique, seulement l'intensité, rush d'intensité, vitesse concentrée d'un vouloir dire sans manière" (118) / "Nothing psychological, only the intensity, rush of intensity, concentrated speed of a rough-mannered desire to say" (112). The "vouloir dire," conventionally, the philosophic concept of original intent, has no inherent essence because it is not founded in depth psychology. Mélanie's nonfoundational "vouloir dire" of lesbian "desiring writing" is the affirmative desire to speak, which produces an erotic and analytic intensity when the heterogeneous linguistic and corporeal surfaces of women cross and touch.

I will leave most of Angela's figuration to my discussion of translation in chapter 7, but, in connection with a transgressive utopia of contra-diction, Angela embodies the allusion to conventional lesbian utopias most clearly when she appears as "un songe" (31) / "a dream" (29) and fantastically escapes phallogocentrism and patriarchy in a language that seems to soar outside discourse. Since she works directly as a geologist with the

²¹The connection between Maude Laures and Mélanie is supported by the folding together of the portraits in Laures's notes and material touching of an intersubjective repetition of *m* in their names reminiscent of Irigaray's theory of uncontainable fluid utterance. While Anne-Marie Picard has commented that *L'homme long* separates the portraits of Angela and Mélanie, inferring the patriarchal violence of homophobia and sexism (103), the positive affirmative aspect of the consecutive portraits of Mélanie and Maude have previously gone unnoticed. Such oppositional aspects as the criticism of patriarchally constructed figurations and affirmative support for lesbian, feminist, and deregulating constructions form the contra-dictions of positive and negative perspectives in Brossard's work.

patriarchal figures of violence in Death Valley Junction, Angstelle's construction of Angela's utopic outside, contrarily, folds most closely into the inside²² and disavows a lesbian separatism of language or the construction of lesbian as a separate target language. Her figuration within an idyllic utopia of outside opposition assassinates her: death is the most extreme otherness of discursive life. Nonetheless, Angstelle's inscription of Angela's difference is not censored by Brossard or Laures as an improper strategy. The strategies for opening the horizon of hope become the undescrivable energy of movement rather than a representational substance. Lesbian "desiring writing" lies in the various strategic configurations of contextual negotiation that create uncontainable and unpredictable potential.

Robyn Wiegman's criticism of the lesbian "utopic project of being" (5) or the assumption that the growing commodification of the lesbian represents "evidence of political progress" (3) cannot be levelled at Brossard's sense of continuous becomings (not being) and non-valorized lesbian differences that cross positional and historical ranges of representation. Further, Claudine Potvin argues that "Les utopies proposés par Peri Rossi et Brossard supposent une transgression permanente; nouvelle perspective instaurant par ailleurs des formes de contre-utopie ou d'anti-utopie qui ne situent plus les discours utopique et fictif uniquement dans le non-lieu, l'ailleurs imaginaire, l'inconnu"

²²Perhaps this close connection with phallogocentrism is why Anne-Marie Picard argues that Angela represents the masculinist, scientific mastery of the phallogocentric symbolic (108). Contrary to Picard, however, I argue that Angstelle's Angela's negotiation from within the Lacanian discourse of lack enables her resistance. She does not teach Mélanie to suppress the body and the loss of the maternal body. Instead, she teaches her how to speak it from within the enclosures of contemporary discourse.

(54). By including in the exploded parameters of lesbian desire such conventionally anti-utopian elements as the television,²³ which generates Lorna's oppositional tirades, or the daily life of commerce at Kathy's motel and Lorna's garage, Brossard constructs the utopian in the "ordinaire," the identifiable world, viewed from another perspective. Objects themselves have no solidity: parts fall off, letters fall away. The name of "le garage Helljoy" (91) on the ashtray that sits on the television becomes "G RAGE EL JOY" (75) in the chance friction of time and space. Further, by crossing, recrossing, and con-fusing incommensurable figurations of lesbian desire with differential contradictions, Brossard creates the effect of an utopian no place as the site of transit between unstable places. The positional and ordinary figurations allow, as Potvin argues, a specificity that enables Brossard to make lisable what has been constructed as unspeakable. However, contrary to Potvin, the answer to the question, "Where is the lesbian?" is still everywhere and nowhere, because lesbian "desiring writing" is in the intensity and eroticism of slippage between partial positions. Parker writes, of Brossard's extensive intertextual reference in *Amantes* to Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*, that

²³In an interview with Clea Notar, in which Brossard discusses having just finished *Le désert mauve*, she comments on the potential of the television both to evoke quietism and to develop an oppositional perspective:

. . . it doesn't take much to bring you back to your dissatisfaction. All you've got to do is watch television, especially the news and then you are reminded about the real world, the standard values, who is in charge, who gets the goodies. Dissatisfaction, frustration, desire to change things are important motivations to write, to "recreate the world." But you also need to have other stimulations if you want to propose another version of reality. You need beauty, connivance, complicity in order to go beyond opposition and to be able to make new propositions on love, power, sexuality, work, etc. (142)

“Brossard’s favorite phrase” is Barnes’s ““an image is a stop the mind makes between two uncertainties”” (qtd. in Parker 111). This phrase echoes in the translator’s notes of *Le désert mauve* as well: Maude Laures “s’assoupit «dans la Meteor, entre deux chansons»” (63) / “dozed off ‘in the Meteor, between two songs’” (59). As the site of intense movement between endless inscriptions, lesbian “desiring writing” becomes the mobile leap between already destabilized figurations, which further intensifies the erotic charge of difference rather than reducing it to the commodified solidity of a saleable or necessarily progressive subject, object, or ontology.

In *(SEM)EROTICS: theorizing lesbian : writing*, Elizabeth Meese argues that “Brossard excels in the articulation of a lesbian (sem)erotics” because language and body meet in the Derridean “white scene” of differential drift between “sense and sense” (89). Quoting Shoshana Feldman, Meese argues,

“. . . language [like the lover] makes itself part of what it refers to (without, however, being all that it refers to). . . . The referent is no longer simply a preexisting *substance*, but an *act*, that is, a dynamic movement of modification of reality” . . . [an] imbrication of terms, one term inextricably related to the others.
(91)

The eroticism generated by the partiality and con-fusion of the contra-dictions of languages and bodies in *Le désert mauve* resists the violence necessarily implicated when the cortex is split into separate systems (figured through L’homme long). Yet following a Derridean deconstructive logic, Meese argues that in “the expression of the forbidden,” perhaps the expression of the word’s transgressive connection with bodily sense, “A

violation takes place; and a violence” (94) that generates erotic energy. The “literal body,” she argues, “is . . . not there” (2), and this “split affords the condition for seduction” (87) because it mimics the act of love: “I want you to be separate so that I can feel the thrill of taking (you) over, composing you/me/mine/ours. For a moment I construct you/me: inseparable” (95-96). What appears in Meese’s argument to be a deconstruction of binary opposition resolves in the violence of Hegelian appropriation in an erotics of conquest that erases differences within the other in order to construct the self.

Brossard’s “desiring writing” that moves in an unfixed utopian ‘no place’ between corporeal and linguistic bodies refuses the reduction of difference as an erotic violation. Laures’s exact repetition of Angstelle’s Mélanie’s insistent “Je ne peut tutoyer personne” (51, 220) / “I cannot get close to any you” (46, 202) suggests an unmoveable stance against the issue of Hegelian appropriation. The pronominal inscription in Laures’s translator’s notes reveals abandonment, by both Mélanie and Maude, of the violent mastery implied in the binary relation of *I/you*. Instead, Mélanie and Maude deploy an intersubjectivity that maintains the alterity of heterogeneous surfaces that create desiring intensity when they touch both within and between subjectivities. The differences between molecular and quantum components that have no pre-object of desire is not the same as violent opposition between solidified subjects, objects, or positions. The connection between partial components forms a non-binary relation that Deleuze describes as an open equation of “ $x + y + z$ ” and Irigaray describes “ $x + y$ ” (rather than $x + \text{not-}x$). For Brossard, *la dérive* generated by the proximity of differences within the cortex, rather than their complete otherness, creates the erotics of slippage. Violence is

relegated to the nomadic war machine that analytically decodes the systemic organization that categorically distinguishes and divides. Such violence enables the erotic syntheses and connections in the lesbian “white scene,” or “vfenres,” of “desiring writing,” but, as L’homme long’s explosion testifies, it is not in itself erotic.

If, as deconstruction proposes, what is taken for reality is an effect of inscription, then the real and the symbolic, body and language, not only do not violate each other but open the possibility for discourse to change subjectivity. In *Le désert mauve*, Angstelle’s Mélanie insists on the need to change the illumination of the real to something less violently patriarchal than an absent reflection: “. . . de toutes mes forces j’appuyais sur mes pensées pour qu’elles penchent la réalité du côté de la lumière” (14) / “. . . with every ounce of my strength I was leaning into my thoughts to make them slant reality toward the light” (13). While Angstelle’s Mélanie may at times suggest a real outside of discourse, Laures’s Mélanie opens the horizon for change more convincingly by arguing for the spiralling potential inscribed in the effect of the real: “. . . de tout mon être j’appuyais sur le pan fragile de mes pensées pour qu’elles soient penchant de l’instant, pour que ça compte vraiment la réalité” (184) / “. . . with my entire being I was leaning on the fragile side of my thoughts to make them penchant of the moment, to make reality count for real” (169). If reality is created by the effect of discourse, a discourse of heterogeneous coded and uncoded partial presences and surfaces of affect will demolish the negative Lacanian sense of the ‘real’ as the lack and separation that founds desire and language. As Louise Dupré writes in *Stratégies du vertige: trois poètes: Nicole Brossard, Madeleine Gagnon, France Théoret*, writing derived from words challenges the

separation between the psychoanalytic categories of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic. The real becomes tied to reality, a reality that one takes on as one becomes conscious. Brossard's real can be signified (103). In the Lacanian system, Brossard writes, ". . . la réalité est enfermement, petite tombe qui trompe le désir" (184) / ". . . reality is confinement, a little grave that misleads desire" (169). Lacan's originary inaccessible 'no place' of desire becomes a static enclosure, a place of absence rather than the Brossardian 'no place' of unregulated movement between partial molecular and quantum presences.

Speaking a different (rhizomatic, aerial) language, Maude Laures echoes Derrida's theory of the deconstructive undecidable that leads to mobile translation²⁴ and finds possibility for "relancer le sens et lui éviter d'affronter la fin brutale d'Angela Parkins" (175) / to "get meaning restarted and spare her from facing Angela Parkins' brutal end" (159). Laures investigates what she can do with the effect of the subject and becomings in language rather than what they are.²⁵ Instead of emphasizing the linear trajectory toward tragedy (always already part of a heterogenous, rhizomatic discourse of

²⁴In "Living On — Borderlines," Derrida argues that ". . . unreadability does not arrest reading, does not leave it paralysed in the face of an opaque surface: rather, it starts reading and writing and translation moving again. The unreadable is not the opposite of the readable, but rather the ridge that also gives it momentum, movement, sets it in motion" (qtd. in Nealon 36).

²⁵While de Lotbinière-Harwood's translation is very good at conveying the slippery relations of language, gender, body, and the philosophic alternation of focus, a particular passage in Laures's text begs for additional comment: "Je suis des pistes, la trace du temps, des triangles, des spirales, autour des ruines, des barkhanes, mobiles" (188) not only means "I follow trails, the trace of time, triangles, spirals, around ruins, barkhans, mobiles" (174), but also, "I am" that inscription and movement.

conflicting forces), she places emphasis on the moving virtual parts, the stakes within the game where “Elle avait beau jeu” (172) / “Her game was a beauty” (156) virtually becomes the joy of movement (elle avait bougé / she had moved) that opens a space for a lesbian/feminist corporeal interlanguage that not only has no existing target language but also continues in the virtual event-horizon of the reading act beyond the target literally inscribed by the word. Investigation of the subject in language, where the characters “se défiler” (176) / “slip away” (160), allows Laures a space, as she writes in her translation of Mélanie’s narrative, “pour creuser les mots sans souiller les tombes” (220) / “for digging into words without defiling graves” (202). In linguistic play across languages, she can erotically cruise words (“creuser”) in a *French Kiss*²⁶ without raising the dead of absent origins, relying on exclusionary categorical identity, or murdering the body as unspeaking, a writing process that Banting humorously calls “writing under embrasure” (167-77).²⁷

²⁶Brossard describes the linguistic French kiss as a procedure where “chaque phrases bascule dans une autre phrase” / “every sentence topples into another one” (*She Would Be* 108, 109). Louise Forsyth describes it as the penetration of “lifeless stereotypes.” An “active desire” “linking language and corporal reality, making all barriers fall,” is physically represented in the kiss between Marielle and Camomille Delphie in Brossard’s *French Kiss* (“The Novels of Nicole Brossard” 37).

²⁷The pun of Banting’s term “writing under embrasure” with the Derridean “writing under erasure” inscribes the difference in deconstruction of the contiguity (rather than separation) of body and language in writers like Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand.

Chapter 7. Translation, the Loving War Machine of “Délire,” and Intersubjectivity at the “Speed of Light”¹

Cruising textual and corporeal feminine bodies, Brossard’s lesbian “desiring writing” poses strategic essentialisms, molecular substances, of “particular, embodied subject positions” (Parker 203) that are held together and torn apart by quantum energy that moves at the speed of light and not only shifts the substance into something else but also decodes the molecular solidity of previous inscriptions in order to open new possibilities within the “vfentres.” As Deleuze and Guattari argue, the molecular nomadism of the war machine “involves all kinds of deformations, transmutations, passages to the limit, operations in which each figure designates an ‘event’ much more

¹Alice Parker entitles the subsection on Brossard’s quantum poetics “At the Speed of Light.” Her discussion of Brossard’s transmutation of words into other words at a lettristic level of particle interaction and ideas that shift in *différance* within the “vfentres” of language relates directly to my conception of the speeding quantum connections of intersubjectivity in a lesbian body without organs.

than an essence” (*Thousand Plateaus* 362).² Brossard’s outrageously sacred and profane³ reinscriptions of Roman Catholic Dante’s ‘angel’ Beatrice (who becomes Mary) into a female, material, and secular embodiment of the word and his homosexual hell into the epiphanic ecstasy of speaking in tongues inscribes a certain violence that shifts the figures from tools that produce and reproduce heteropatriarchal values to weapons of assault that enable a lesbian inscription of desiring language. This desiring production occurs in the fold between the conventional sacred and profane. Between this binary opposition, the inspiring (spiralling) energy creates difference that cannot be assimilated into either category or the systems that produce them. The secular-sacred becomes the excited energy of linguistic particles that creatively spin out of their original orbits, and the secular-profane finds evidence of lesbian production on the surfaces of literary and biblical canonical writing and transgresses their originary symbolic significations with

²Deleuze and Guattari argue that the changes which occur in a material in process are caused neither by pure substance nor pure form but by a meeting of the two that changes both. In the example of the changes that occur in the material of iron in the making of a sword, which I cite in the subsection of “Rhizomatic Connections” entitled “The Schizoanalysis of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari,” the molecular element/substance of iron remains the same although the “coupling” of “*events-affects*” changes the qualities. A similar transformation through the coupling of events-affects occurs in the reading/writing event. However, thought in itself is insubstantial and abstract, although it is propelled by the materials of language and bodies. Further, the speed at which the changes occur in a word and between words to produce concepts and words that are not actually on the page asks for something more than a theory of substances. For both of these reasons, I qualify the molecular theory of Deleuze and Guattari with a theory of quantum particles that includes the production of virtual particles and moves at the speed of light.

³Brossard’s use of the sacred and profane to inscribe unassimilable difference is reminiscent of Georges Bataille.

quantum leaps that enable a production of lesbian desiring intersubjectivity within language.

The oppositional violence of a war machine that attacks the exclusionary codes of gender, sexuality, body, and language and turns them into weapons of assault to enable a resisting lesbian intersubjectivity in language that translates without fidelity and produces new desiring relations. Yet the intersubjective relation of difference between Maude Laures and Laure Angstelle produces an abstract sense of a lesbian “desiring writing” in the erotic “*vfentre*” of the space between the two strategically essentialist inscriptions without oppositional violence. In the space between the specific decoding acts of translation or “*délire*” in Angstelle’s and Laures’s stories, a nonfoundational lesbian intersubjectivity of loving connection and support between differences emerges as a ghostly becoming present that allows the unspeakable incommensurability of lesbian “desiring writing” to become readable by exposing certain interactions with the codes or theoretic, philosophic, and historic contexts in which they are written. Without Maude Laures’s nominal⁴ and philosophic doubling of *Laure* Angstelle with difference, this lesbian embodiment of language (that is not identification or identical) may remain invisible. The utopic space between the decoding interventions of each fictional author exposes both the untruth of essential lesbian inscription (identity) and, at the same time, a lesbian becoming in language. In the intersubjectivity between Maude Laures and Laures

⁴Maude Laures improperly takes on and pluralizes Laure Angstelle’s first name as her proper, familial name, implying a lesbian genealogy and the multiplicity such genealogy might infer.

Angstelle (and between the characters inscribed in each text), Brossard takes “le temps d’aimer ses personnages” / “the time to love her characters” (*She Would Be* 10, 11) and relies on the desiring connections between partial objects that makes something other than either of the originals. However, intersubjectivity with heteropatriarchal figures inscribes a loving “délire” that must proceed through an oppositional violence and erasure of the ‘original’ figures of violent censure and separation between the body and lesbian “desiring writing.” This differential perspective, between violence against the violence of categorical enclosure and a nonviolent mingling of partial inscriptions, embodies the uncontainable gaze of the novel.⁵

What is at stake in *Le désert mauve* is, as Laures says, intensive quantum movement at the speed of light that will open perspective and categorical containment:

La lumière écrasant toute perspective. La lumière tissant l’enjeu. . . . Enjeu de vie, enjeu de mort . . . une souplesse du corps, un rythme dans la chair, un carnaval multipliant les aubes. . . . Précarité de l’image. Vitesse. «Lumière rapide». (154)

Light crushing all perspective. Light spinning what is at stake. . . . Life stakes, death stakes . . . a fluency of the body, a rhythm in the flesh, a carnival multiplying dawns. . . . Precariousness of the image. Speed. “Rapid light.” (142)

⁵Barbara Godard calls *L’Amèr ou le chapitre effrité* “a violent book, an exercise in wu-do, in self-defence against the violence against women in patriarchal society and literature through its representation of women” (“Nicole Brossard” 124). As one concept, image, or categorical system crashes against and mingles with its opposite in *Le désert mauve*, Brossard’s decoding strategies also operate in this manner, but the loving intersubjectivity between the molecular bodies in figures, language, thoughts, and corporeality suggest the dynamics of the “French kiss” are more pervasive in this novel.

As Jean-François Lyotard argues, the conquest of knowledge is what is at stake in all language games (Lyotard 10). The oppositional perspective of strategic essentialism, the need to hold a molecular gaze — “Avant tout, soutenir le regard” (147) — is necessary to develop the diverse specificities of a historically contextualized and politicized lesbian “desiring writing” that struggles against the exclusionary violence of official histories and doctrines. Without an embodied gaze, the politics of various lesbian-feminist struggles vaporizes into the nonspecific Deleuzian “becoming-woman”⁶ as a stage toward “becoming-molecular.” But the opposition of holding the gaze and insisting the body is a full presence in writing is also not enough. A lesbian or feminist possession of the gaze can solidify into an imperialist colonization of the terms of lesbian or feminist struggle and similarly obliterate political terms of difference. In *Le désert mauve*, not only does

⁶In *She Would Be*, Brossard clearly articulates her resistance to the erasure of an embodied specificity in Deleuze’s theory of “becoming-women”:

Eut-elle été un homme, il lui aurait même été possible de devenir une femme à chaque roman. Il aurait suffi de le vouloir et le monde l’aurait crue, aurait compris ce qu’est une femme . . . docile ou fatale, universelle comme l’ombre. (32)

Had she been a man, it would even have been possible for her to become a woman with every novel. She could simply have had to want it and everybody would have believed her, would have understood what a woman is . . . docile or *fatale*, as universal as a shadow. (33)

Similarly, various specific historical struggles of feminists disappear in Derrida’s figuration of ‘woman’ as a generalized philosophic metaphor for the untruth of truth (*Spurs*). Irigaray’s feminist philosophy also reduces specificity by figuring lesbianism as a stage to be surpassed in what she considers the more accomplished heterosexual desiring relations of male-female difference and attraction (*This Sex* 32-33). In an argument for a united feminist front, Irigaray also disavows the importance of the strife-torn struggles around divisive issues of power, definition of feminist struggle, appropriation of cultural voices, discourse, and visibility that occur within the women’s movement (*This Sex* 206, 217). Brossard’s shifting angles of vision allow for contradictory differences within a nonfoundational coalitional politics.

L'homme long's control of light (the gaze of the assassin and the nuclear explosion) enact a violence that would prohibit nonfoundational coalition politics in the unknown future development of alternative speech acts (his silencing of Angela), it also resurrects a binary, metaphysical hierarchy that separates elements and denies quantum probabilities for spontaneous, deregulated creation. Caroline Bayard argues that Brossard's utopic inscription of nomadic movement toward an unknown future echoes Roland Barthes's "«nouveau monde adamique»" but insists on the inclusion of sexual difference (87). If Angela is not to be silenced in language or eradicated because her vital body connects her to nature, sexual difference must be included, although not as a static, isolated, and naturalized element.

Either side of the full/depleted binary suggested by the desert light "travaille, dématérialisant la réalité, laissant notre regard captif de ce qui fut, hanté par «l'aspect final de la matière»" (153) / "works at dematerializing reality, leaving our gaze captive of what was, haunted by 'the definitive aspect of matter'" (141). While full light suggests the blinding capacity of the metaphysical full presence of God or, alternatively, of L'homme long's annihilating nuclear explosion that accompanies the death of the subject in the exclusively supplementary linguistic effect of the subject, the concept of the full body raises either the absence of a 'divine' outside or an unspeaking nature. In either case, fullness of body or light functions within systemic regulation and disables the ability to change the effect of the real that comes through the connection of partial presences. Contrary to the psychoanalytic position, reality, for Brossard, is inscribed in the symbolic, in the regulation, enumeration, and naming within the *pharmakon* that

displaces full presence — “Ça compte la réalité!” (157) / “Reality counts!” (144) — and can be changed as long as it moves with the quantum speed of specific and virtual particles. As a scientist of language, “Geiger au poing” (157) / “Geiger counter in hand” (144), Brossard spins and investigates the radioactive traces of light (cosmic rays, ‘angels’ of language) that mutate life.⁷

The shifting gaze that displaces each subject or object of representation to a mobile elsewhere does not rely on a jouissant reference outside language and history but emerges in what Kristeva calls “Le vréel,” or the “true-real,” of the concrétude of the signifier detached from a phallogocentric signified. In “The True-Real” Kristeva writes that, in literature, words “are never ‘pure signifiers’ but always word’ and ‘flesh’ and [operate] . . . between these extremes and/or their identity to the extent that they are a microscopic exploration of murder *as* resurrection . . . [that] bestow[s] plausibility on the signifier and the real . . .” (*Kristeva Reader* 227). The murder of the father of speech (logos) as the symbolic referent outside language short-circuits the displacement of the

⁷My reference to *cosmic rays* is not mystical but physical. Capra writes:

When these highly energetic ‘cosmic rays’ hit the atmosphere of the Earth, they collide with the nuclei of the atmosphere’s air molecules and produce a great variety of secondary particles which either decay or undergo further collisions, thus creating more particles which collide and decay again, and so on, until the last of them reach the Earth. In this way, a single proton plunging into the Earth’s atmosphere can give rise to a whole cascade of events in which its original kinetic energy is transformed into a shower of various particles, and is gradually absorbed as they penetrate the air undergoing multiple collisions. The same phenomenon that can be observed in the collision experiments of high-energy physics thus occurs naturally but more intensely all the time in the Earth’s atmosphere; a continual flow of energy going through a great variety of particle patterns in a rhythmic dance of creation and destruction. (248)

signifier to the disavowal or displacement of desire into “strategies of *semblance*, that help to construct subjective economies of identification and project, normalized and stabilized by the Oedipus complex” (*Kristeva Reader* 226). In *Le désert mauve*, the strategic essentialisms, or contra-dictory figurations of lesbian desiring reading/writing, are not displaced as castrated supplements of an unknowable lesbian essence outside history and language but form a nonfoundational and noisy, rhizomatic chorus speaking differently together. Neither are they interchangeable supplements for a lesbian desire that emerges as the Derridean unspeakable “other.” As Kelly Oliver argues, Derrida’s theory of “interchangeable” supplements relies on an economy of castration and *méconnaissance* (77). Instead, the intersubjectivity of a holographic and shifting gaze in *Le désert mauve* simultaneously embodies the strategic figurations of the differences within and between the contingent locations of lesbian characters, writers, and translators as an affirmative nonfoundational politics that insists the micrological presences of each not be deferred to a larger unity and that the reality of historical and linguistic violence against women and lesbians not be disavowed, sublated, or transferred onto a supplement.⁸ In the shifting gaze of an affirmative nonfoundational politics, each figuration resists disappearance and invisibility because it remains specific and

⁸As Kristeva argues, the equation of truth and falsehood with reality is part of a neurotic sublimation that leads to the foreclosure (displacement, untruth) of the signifier. However, she qualifies, “[a]rtistic discourse . . . eliminates the operator (t, f), but succeeds in bestowing plausibility on the signifier . . .” (*Kristeva Reader* 227). The truth of untruth in Derrida’s figuration of the woman in *Spurs* denies the “plausibility” of truth in lesbian and feminist political activism in historic, linear, linguistic time that defers to nothing outside the contingent needs of the present.

irreducible in its historical and linguistic contexts. However, because these contexts are never unitary even for one character, the controlling gaze dissolves.

The holographic shifting gaze that develops a desiring lesbian intersubject in the novel also moves between these affirmative figurations of various lesbian characters and theories and the negative appropriation of language by the decoding war machine that turns the tools of the Oedipal state into weapons of assault by using the logic of disconnection from the phallogos, the authorial father of speech, to inscribe presence in the signifier. This paralogical inscription of partial presence in the signifier (premised on its absent connection with and absence of the regulating presence of authorial intent) enables a lesbian “desiring writing” to emerge from Dante’s inscription of women and homosexuals without relying on a semiotic body outside language or discursive construction. In the silent space of referential absence and the elliptical return of difference, the deregulated angels of language appear as the “E muet mutant” of the auteur-e (*author*) that multiplies with translation across speaking female bodies and twists the angle of vision from a Lacanian sublimation, in which “. . . la réalité est *enfermement*, petite tombe qui trompe le désir” / “. . . reality is confinement, a little grave that misleads desire” to the next sentence in which the enclosure of *l’enfer* opens into the combustion of linguistic performance (*faire*) that fires the pre-text and changes sense: “La réalité est un feu de paille qui *prétend*” / “Reality is a flash-fire that pretends” (emphasis added; 184 / 169). Reality is the joy of surfaces with no depth.

In Angela’s gaze during the ballet at l’Opera d’Armagosa, there is no sign of the ‘tenor,’ as I have previously discussed. This arms her against the concept of *jouissance*

(Sp. *arma*, ‘weapon’ + *goza*, ‘pleasure,’ ‘jouissance’) as an excess that escapes the signifier and relies on a fullness of presence that is separated from the *méconnaissance* of language. Parallel to a masculinist poststructuralism, but in another location, she writes her report amid aridity “pendant que les hommes préparaient le retour à Death Valley Junction” (100) / “while the men prepared to return to Death Valley Junction” (93).

Without the *méconnaissance* of language, there are only the bodies of corporeality and language, the signs and surfaces of effect. But the idea of the body as a sign has to be decolonized. The representation of the female bodies, painted by the sixteenth-century Spanish colonizers, that fill the walls at the Armagosa Opera House have no voices (elles “chuchotent” / whisper), no gaze, and no presence: they masquerade their lack with fans and elaborate tresses. They are tools for measuring “civilisation,” phallic height, and the lay of the land. As unspeaking matrix, matter, the full body of nurturing earth, with “Le rouge et le bleu des robes, poitrines toute chair” (100) / “The red and blue of the dresses, bosoms all of flesh” (93), they speak a warring of empires (Canada/Québec, Spain/America?) in the opposition of red and blue that is not a mauve mixing between the surface signs of body and language. These are not the women, like the ballerina in drag, that attract Angela’s desiring gaze: “Elle aimait que les corps soient habité par des passions ou qu’ils puissent en exprimer les clichés, prendre des poses inégalées par aucun animal” (100) / “She loved for bodies to be occupied by passions or for them to express passions’ clichés, adopt poses unequalled by any animal” (94). As a feminine “spectatrice” and target (“butte-témoin”) in and of language (101), Angela bears witness both to the change of language as it crosses the body and the need to speak, desire, and

assert the gaze rather than to be the spoken, desired, object of the phallic gaze.

The embodiment of language is not outside symbolic systems of representation, is not ‘originally’ inscribed by what Annamarie Jagose insists is an essential lesbian body outside patriarchal language. The embodiment of language in Brossard’s ‘sources’ is the displacement of Mary’s speaking body into the body of Christ as the Word of God (phallogos) that is nurtured by her unspeaking womb. Not only does the blinding light in *Le désert mauve* intertextually connect through Dante’s Beatrice to Mary but the textual repetition of heat and light at dawn, noon, and night also creates a supplement that connects the name “Angela” and the “angelus,” a prayer recited at dawn, noon, and sunset in praise of Mary’s proximity with and conception of the Lord. But the supplement, as that which defers to an unspeakable, sublimated real, is refused. As the feminine angel of language, Angel-a derails the full presence of territorial, corporeal location into the cortex that mixes and contaminates the purity of a divisive mind/body split.⁹ Brossard’s delirious unreading and deconstruction, her passionate “délire,” leaps on the surfaces of language that inscribe Mary’s conception of the Word, erases the foundational phallic

⁹See my introduction for a description of Deleuze and Guattari’s argument that the deterritorialization of the territorial orality of the mouth (*sens*) is reterritorialized through the linguistic sense of state organization to uphold the Oedipal inscription of lack as the body submits to the disembodied graphe of writing. Angela’s cortex is, Laures writes, . . . le corps . . . à sensation, chaos, atome, chair vive . . . les explosions de joie, de voix . . . la parole touffue, abondante et crue car, pensait-elle, le corps doit être vorace et tout à la fois pouvoir s’envoler capricieux et ductile comme un fil de soie. (100)
 . . . the body . . . of sensation, chaos, atom, vivid flesh . . . explosions of joy, of voices . . . speech that is luxuriant, abundant and raw for, she believed, the body must be voracious and in the same breath be able to fly off as capricious and ductile as a silk thread. (94)

referent, and connects Angela's perception of the embodied constitution of the word with the fictions of women speaking, translating, and negotiating in language. Without transcendental depth, such nonreferential language opens a reading/writing space that connects across surfaces of sound that embody the signifier of the Lord as lore and Laure(s). The female embodiment of the word as fiction becomes a plausible change that appears as "le vréal" in the virtual production of the signifier itself. In the linguistic drift across the heterogeneous tools of language, Brossard's misappropriation of the angelus in Angela becomes a weapon for the construction of partial presences in Angela's lesbian embodiment of the word.¹⁰

This 'dissemination' of the word made flesh in the feminine spirals through an elliptical return of *différance* so that the "tool" that reproduces the phallogocentric figure of woman enters the event-horizon and becomes the Deleuzian "weapon" of the war machine that cannot be internalized or "appropriated locally" by the state. Brossard draws on this kind of "shared line of flight of the weapon and the tool: a pure possibility, a mutation" (*Thousand Plateaus* 403). Between the marginal linguistic, literary, and religious elements, the heat, light, and embodiment of the word in the novel create a series of what Deleuze and Guattari call "fuzzy aggregates" (*Thousand Plateaus* 408) that

¹⁰Alice Parker writes that in *L'Amèr* Brossard constructs "a strategic wound in the symbolic order" (42) — "J'ai tué le ventre et je l'écris" (*L'Amèr* 11) / "I have murdered the womb and I am writing it" (*These Our Mothers* 21) — and substitutes "an unlikely female family of mother, daughter and lesbian lover . . . for the 'holy family' consecrated by Christianity and psychoanalysis, the archetypal trio of Mary the Virgin, Joseph her consort, and the sacred male child" (42). In *Le désert mauve*, Brossard brings Mary into the lesbian family with outrageous transgression that makes sense.

have intensely affective energy that redirects value out of the sedentary alignments of fixed essence. The local minorities (lesbians of language), that Deleuze and Guattari argue remain outside state recuperation, surpass the boundaries of distinction and proper definition and form “a polymorphous war machine” (*Thousand Plateaus* 360) that moves between global elements (religion, philosophy). The passionate heat of a profane gaze that transgresses systemic bodies of discourse destabilizes the alignment of *femmes damnées* (disembodied and unreal in language) and Dante’s homosexuals with the enclosure (*l’enfermement*) of language and reality in an Oedipal hell (*l’enfer*). Lares asks, “N’était-ce pas l’expression du regard qui permettait de distinguer parmi les outils, les armes et les ornements . . . ?” (100) / “Wasn’t it the expression in the gaze that made it possible to distinguish between the tools, the weapons and the ornaments . . . ?” (93). In order to maintain the deterritorializing transit between global sweep and local particularity, the gaze must both be held and dissolve at the speed of light to enable a lesbian embodiment in the cortex (corps/texte) where, as Lares writes, the truth, “*alêthéia*,” emerges as the passionate production of plausibility on the surfaces of the interwoven signifiers of the tongue (la langue). Truth, “*alêthéia*,” becomes “Elle était . . .” (101) / “She was . . .” (94): the truth of mobile materials in female bodies of language in action.¹¹

Maude Lares’s echo of the concept of *alêtheia* raised in Plato’s cave returns in

¹¹Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of the nomadic body without organs focuses not on what the body is but on what the body can do as it crosses various thresholds in the processes of becoming.

elliptical difference. In *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray criticizes the “virginity and muteness” of the womblike representation of the original concept or substance, *alētheia*, that ensures the return of the same phallogentric perspective in the prison of representation. Irigaray writes that, in an erasure of difference, “the privilege enjoyed by the *phōnē*” that ensures “present existence, the presence of the existence of the *alētheia*,” undergoes a double movement: having established the truth of embodied presence, “the power of truth will enslave and eclipse the instrument that established its authority. Truth will exist, an eternal presence, without that material element, reduced to the medium of one of its manifestations: the realization of voice” (263-65). When Maude Laures asks, “Qu’est-ce que la vérité?” / “What is truth?” materiality does not disappear. The sound echoes in another material body connecting the “surfaces of sense”: “*Alēthéia, alēthéia*. Elle était comme une butte-témoin échappée à l’érosion, spectatrice isolée, preuve” (101) / “*Aletheia, aletheia*. She was like a witness-mound that has escaped erosion, isolated spectator, proof” (94). More than a manifestation of abstract truth, she “is” the body of language in the mouth and the sound of female bodies in language that create reality in the cortex of voice that emerges in the sign rather than pre-linguistically.

The development of the Oedipal speaking subject who has lost connection with origin (postulated as such essence as the unspeaking body, nature, nonindividuated fusion with the mother, God, truth) is a metaphysical fiction constructed to regulate social order by inscribing in the individual an interior depth or essence that can never be fully satisfied by social inscriptions because it is essentially unrepresentable. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, language deterritorializes the territorial orality of the mouth, then

reterritorializes it with linguistic sense that constructs systemic organization (*Kafka* 19-20) and erases the nonsystemic heterogeneity of an embodied voice and a disembodied writing that act on each other (*Anti-Oedipus* 202-03). Laures's flight between the oral, territorial, material surfaces of sound in the mouth and the textual, deterritorialized sense of being or truth in feminine, religious, and philosophic signification — "*Alêthéia*" / "Elle était" — restores the heterogeneity of language and exposes the Oedipal subject of phallogocentric lack as a partial inscription of linguistic subjectivity and knowledge. Within the lesbian (not Oedipal) triangle of two mothers and a daughter, as Parker writes, the motel is "a multidimensional locus which . . . shelters Mélanie's lesbian family. It provides her with (at least minimal) social, psychic and intellectual nourishment: it is where she learns to read and to decode the world into which she has been inserted" (132). As a nomadic space crossed by L'homme long's transient occupation, phallogocentrism is revealed not as the timeless truth of language itself but as a temporary occupation and partial inscription by a patriarchal *l'enfer-mement* (enclosure in hell).

"Délire" by transgressive allusion, which reduces such classical concepts as *alêtheia*, Mary, and Dante's trilogy to micrological and microlinguistic elements, opens atomic and molecular holes in the seemingly solid surfaces of discourse and literary intertexts that can no longer maintain the systemic control of intent. Spinning away from their prior nuclear orbits, the particles reveal the partial inscriptions of patriarchal violence to female and homosexual subjectivities and connect with other surfaces of inscription and other bodies that change the meaning. As Dupré writes in *Stratégies du vertige*, Brossard works with literature as a science, combining "dérive" (drift, leeway)

with “maîtrise” (mastery, self control), a patience, rigour, and method that is shocking in relation to the flow, slippage, gaping, openness, and repugnance to precise form and methodology in the practice of écriture féminine that suggests that the unspeakable feminine exists between the lines and outside language. “Maîtrise,” Dupré argues, is connected with the juridical empowerment of “habilité,” so that Brossard’s perfection in technique aligns with science and knowledge as know-how (savoir faire) (113).

Brossard’s perfect synchrony between control and explosion (“maîtrise” and “dérive”) spirals into a return with contamination (Dupré 114). Dupré argues that, in Brossard’s classical emphasis on form, tone, image, syntax, sound, and poetic ambiguity, poetry becomes a word science, a way of reinvesting the symbolic code with feminist desire through the invention of new signs” (24-25). Rather than simply investigating lesbian “desiring writing” as what has not been written (the blind spots), or what is outside consciousness and unspeakable (the Lacanian real), Brossard works with the classical poetic convention of the seductive materiality of language that generates new meaning among partial presences in a nonsystemic, or rhizomatic, relation of polysemic utterance.

Brossard’s negotiations with Dante’s *The Divine Comedy* sweep the lesbian intertexts of her own *Picture Theory*, Barnes’s *Nightwood*, and Jane Rule’s *Desert of the Heart* (1964) into the spiral of Derridean elliptical return that inscribes lesbian difference in *Le désert mauve*. Lorraine Weir argues that the polyvalent and fragmentary syntax in *Picture Theory* opens a space for a lesbian “délire” of Barnes’s *Nightwood* and Dante’s

Hell.¹² The “*scènes blanche[s]*,” in which the “erotic relationship of Claire Dérive and the narrator” take place, atomically disperse throughout the text in the unchained syntax. Weir suggests that these spaces of impassioned reading in the “*vfentres*” without fidelity (“*délire*”) enable Brossard’s affirmative transformation of the Modernist painful “abandonment in love” in Barnes’s already twisted allusion to Dante. Brossard “reclaim[s] the city through language” (Weir 346), shifting her angle of vision by citing/sighting Dante’s city of Dis through the name of Barnes’s transvestite, Dr. Matthew-Mighty-grain-of-salt-Dante-O’Connor. Maude Laures’s reference to Barnes’s phrase “an image is a stop the mind makes between two certainties” (see chapter 6, “Affirmative, Utopian, Lesbian Deconstruction”) and Brossard’s references to Dante and Rule enact a similar process of intertextual lesbian “*délire*” in *Le désert mauve*. However, the hellish pain and enclosure cannot be completely eradicated: utopian bliss is not a harmonious space completely outside heteropatriarchal language. The holes that open in the molecular surfaces of language and patriarchal violence create a passionate folding between the opposition of censure in Dante’s hell and lesbian bliss that enables lines of

¹²In her discussion of the “complex intertextual system [in *Picture Theory*] which fugues its way to [Brossard’s] concluding statement of women’s place in a re-imagined [holographic] world” (346), Lorraine Weir focuses on Brossard’s deployment of James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, *Ulysses*, and “The Dead.” However, the transformation of the holographic text depends, Weir argues, on the play within and between linguistic and gendered bodies and the interaction of multiple texts, which include those of Wittgenstein, Gertrude Stein, Djuna Barnes, and Monique Wittig. A similar translative play is developed in *Le désert mauve*, but the main texts are the theoretical writing of Barthes, Lacan, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, Irigaray, and Butler; the fictional writing of Barnes, Rule, and Dante; and the fictional authors of Laure Angstelle, Maude Laures: an intensifying trajectory that aligns philosophy with the fictional intersubject and fiction with the philosophic construction of the ‘real.’

flight by contaminating the opposition. The oppressive news on the television opens a space for Kathy's critical commentary. The "froideur" that murders the subject as an effect of language opens into passionate possibility for changing reality in the white space of the sign. Catherine Perry argues that "froideur" folds into "ferveur" (Perry 591-92) with an affirmative movement at the speed of light that ensures "... la froideur ne soit point sécheresse" (65) / "coldness not be dryness" (61). The intertextual sites for lesbian production establish textual surfaces for the passionate production of newness unchained from its hellish source.

Rule's mis-appropriation of Dante's Hell, Gillian Spraggs argues, enables the discursive construction of lesbian desire in the fallen city of Reno, Nevada, which shifts the value of homosexual love from the damned realm of Dante's seventh circle in the city of Dis, with its burning "flakes of fire," to "a scene of romance, a place for the flowering of love" (120, 129). *Le désert mauve* evokes such passionate lesbian love with patriarchal intertexts. But rather than conquering the sense of the original intertexts, they remain texts that both enable the production of new sense and must be accounted for. Brossard's *Le désert mauve* evokes Rule's novel in title (*The Desert of the Heart*), in the desiring heat and light of the desert, and the proximity of fictional sites. The site of action (and subjectivity) multiplies from Rule's singular Reno and its rural environs to Brossard's nomadic drift between uncertainties whose locations become increasingly less substantial: Montréal, Albuquerque, the Mauve Motel, near Phoenix, and near Death Valley. Yet Mélanie also travels through intertextual citation that establishes a nomadic gaze that moves between the cities, sites, and sight-lines of the damning escape of

becoming-flâneuse (Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal*), becoming-American-beat-writer (Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*), and, again on the road, becoming-American-country-singer-outlaw (Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings's "On the Road Again").¹³ Along with Rule's intertext, these masculinist intertexts establish discursive sites for the figure of the nomadic outlaw who produces outside the laws of social regulation. While they connect to the outlaw violence of L'homme long that must be accounted for, they also provide a patriarchal genealogy for deregulated linguistic production that does not, contrary to Jagose's insistence, rely on a pre-existent lesbian essence outside patriarchal language that will create new sense.

In the shifting gaze of *Le désert mauve*, the pits of the damned in Dante's hell align with Death Valley, the nuclear science of Robert Oppenheimer, L'homme long, the disembodied jouissance of Roland Barthes, and Jonathan Culler's reading of the deconstructionist aporia of opposition as a disabling *l'enfer-mement* (hellish enclosure) of ethics, politics, and meaning.¹⁴ In Dante's *Hell*, the virtuous poets and philosophers who

¹³I had to limit my focus as these rhizomatic connections began to spring out both within and beyond the Dante intertext through their embodiment in Kathy Kerouac as a speaker and Mélanie's continual speed on the road. Rhizomatic nomadic connection functions against the striated space of academic literary analysis, which demands control, organization, and focus. Consequently, my discussion centres on some of the main resonances of the Dante intertext.

¹⁴In *On Deconstruction*, Culler, the American popularizer of deconstruction, discusses the unreadability of stories that refuse the "idealizing *dénouements*," arguing that the contradiction within the text results in "failure to choose." Such failure, he argues, is the success of a deconstruction that can only point to the limits of meaning:

In [Rousseau's] . . . *Profession de foi* the theism which the text ostensibly promotes is defined as an assent to an inner voice, which is that of Nature, and the choice one is urged to make lies between this voice and judgment; but the

are not Christian (to name three highly relevant figures: Plato, Homer, and Electra) reside on the outskirts of hell, in the first circle of limbo (Canto 3). They “live, in desire, without hope of seeing God” (Musa 20). Immobile in a limbo of displaced, sublimated desire and presence, they raise the spectre of the deconstructive aporia that does not move beyond the conflict of the oppositional binary where ethics and political struggle cannot make a stand because there is no foundation for action in the real. After the death of God and the death of the subject, L’homme long seems to rise from the ninth circle of hell, the well of the violent giants who could be “the ‘executive of Mars’” and who “rebelled against God . . . [when] the ‘general bond of love’ is dissolved and the ‘good of the intellect’ wholly withdrawn” (Sayers notes, *Hell* 269). Dante’s hell remains in Brossard’s text, but much of it burns the violence of a completely negative deconstruction that is destruction more than opening.¹⁵

Yet allusions to *Hell* also create lines of flight for lesbian inscription that paralogically combine with the ecstasy of *Purgatory* and *Paradise*. Mélanie is named on “une belle nuit d’avril” when Kathy’s pregnant body takes on a fullness between the

possibility of such a choice is undermined by the system of concepts within the text, for on the one hand assent to the inner voice is defined as an act of judgment and, on the other hand, Rousseau’s account of judgment defines it as a process of analogizing and substitution that is a source of error as well as of knowledge. In undoing the oppositions on which it relies and between which it urges the reader to choose, the text places the reader in an outcome already deemed inappropriate: an unwarranted choice or a failure to choose. (81)

¹⁵Gillian Spraggs comments that, in Monique Wittig’s “lesbian-feminist . . . reversal, Hell here becomes the hetero-patriarchy, imaged in powerful sequences of surrealistic cruelty . . .” (121), which reveals Wittig’s *Virgile, Non* as a lesbian-feminist and French deconstructivist intertext in Brossard’s negotiation with Dante.

partial signs of body and text in the cortex, “à point comme des syllabes, tout en écho au sommet de Dante’s View” (201) / “just right like syllables, echoing atop Dante’s View” (185). The summit of Dante’s view is either earthly paradise (*Purgatory*) or the “celestial white rose” presided over by the Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven (Cantos 30-32, *Paradise*). With the loss of the regulatory Oedipal tenor that, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, reterritorialize the signs of the mouth with imperialist sense, earthly paradise deterritorializes into the virtual, linguistic angels (Angela) of language that produce feminine sense in *les scènes blanches* of the “vffentres.” Dante’s *Hell* takes place between Good Friday and Easter Sunday; his *Purgatory* takes place between Easter Sunday and the following Wednesday. The earthly fullness, on that April night of Mélanie’s naming, suggests a naming from within a purgatory that spirals between hell and heaven in the death of the subject and resurrection of potential for change in the mutable surfaces of signs. The burning desert landscape (of the novel and of the seventh circle of Dante’s hell) and the “huge flakes of fire” (14.29) that fall upon the homosexual¹⁶ and nomadic occupants — “Most numerous were the rovers to-and-fro” (Dante, *Hell* 14.25) — link with biblical tongues of fire speaking in ecstatic utterance across various languages on the Epiphany, 6 January, the point of reference which sets the liturgical date for the floating events of Good Friday and Easter. The epiphanic connection of speaking in tongues branches into the interlanguage that has no object or resolution in Kathy’s and Lorna’s

¹⁶As Steve Ellis points out, the raining “flakes of fire” in the seventh circle of hell form an intertextual connection with the fire and brimstone that “poured down on Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19: 24” (84). This connects those who are violent against God, nature, and themselves specifically with homosexuality, rather than homosociality.

mouthings of *m*'s, which in Dante's *Paradise* is the letter that mutates into the fire-breathing eagle of divine peace and unity in the world (Sayers, in Dante, *Paradise* 218-22). It also connects with Laures's "Langue du feu" (172) / "Lingua of fire" (156), her Mélanie's speaking desire with "feu vif" (201) / "with tongue afire" (184), and Lorna's and Mélanie's becoming-dragons. The colours of the sun, jade, white light, and mauve throughout the novel also resonate with the colours of the four women — in furnace flare, in emerald, in white snow, and in purple — in the chariot of the sun in Dante's earthly paradise (*Purgatory* 29.121-32). This transformation between the babble of unspeakable body and speaking in tongues is an alchemical transformation on,¹⁷ or contamination of, the surfaces of language, where, as Perry writes, Brossard's material connection between such oppositions as "froideur"¹⁸ and "ferveur" (or burning in hell and speaking in tongues) heat up the language and change meaning (591-92) by shifting value to the affective surfaces of cor(p)-textual and con(cun)-textual intensity (rather than their deep meaning)¹⁹ in writing lesbian desiring bodies.

¹⁷Circle 8 in Dante's hell is the realm of the alchemists and falsifiers, who tamper "with the basic commodities by which society lives" (Sayers, in Dante 256).

¹⁸See Sigmund Freud's description of the invert as one who is "cold" to the opposite sex (46) as well as of the frigidity of the woman whose "clitoridal zone refuses to abandon its excitability" (143).

¹⁹Brossard's focus on the surface intensities of language and disregard for essentialist deep meanings in such Catholic figures as Mary, the celestial rose, or speaking in tongues moves through a process of forgetting and memory, similar to that which Dante must undergo in his movement toward divine paradise. He must first step into the river Lethe (forgetfulness). He then steps into Evanoë, the river of "good remembrance" that will restore "memory of good but not of evil" (Sayers, in Dante, *Purgatory* 293). Brossard's decoding translation enacts a similar process of memory and forgetfulness that allows her

In the encumbered and deserted subjectivity of a postmodernist praxis (Brossard, “Les pas” 29), Brossard’s “classical commitment to the lucidity and beauty of poetic form” (Parker 113) empties the coded use-value of beauty. Instead, she inscribes beauty into unpredictable life forces or becomings that shockingly arise as the enfolded Deleuzian machines of language and desire plug into an immense outside with the nomadic speed of a “vortex” in a quantum body without organs that is not “one,” solid, or Oedipally individuated (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 380). Beauty “nous garde en mouvement” (Brossard, “La passion” 13) and is, as Lares notes, “«avant la réalité», d’une antériorité polysémique, impensable” (160) / “‘before reality,’ of a polysemic, unthinkable antecedence” (145). As a figure for the enormous outside of the world prior to, or apart from, the reality of (coded) human perception, beauty is not in the eye of the beholder, since there is no eye (gaze) of the subject or object to behold.

Brossard inscribes such beauty onto the material surfaces of language, where it enables a meeting of territorial and deterritorialized surfaces that are not reterritorialized into a system of meaning or the gaze of a subject: “Terre, poussière, un paysage sans fenêtre, sans abri. . . . beauté antérieure, le désert est indescriptible” (149) / “Earth, dust, a landscape without windows, without shelter. . . . preexistent beauty, the desert is indescribable” (138). Beauty exists as rhizomatic collision and creation in a nomadic space of transgression that enables new sense in a lesbian “desiring writing.” As Deleuze and Guattari write,

to mutate meaning.

. . . the earth . . . deterritorializes itself, in a way that provides the nomad with a territory. . . . The nomads inhabit these places; they remain in them, and they make them grow . . . by a series of local operations whose orientation and direction endlessly vary. . . . It is tactile space . . . a sonorous much more than a visual space. The variability, the polyvocality of directions, is an essential feature of smooth spaces of the rhizome type, and it alters their cartography. (*Thousand Plateaus* 381-82)

Brossard's rhizomatic connections across the surfaces and bodies of language (Dante, Catholicism, French surrealism, American beat writers, lesbian realism, philosophy, psychoanalysis, literary theory) is an event of nomadic decoding in which the already multiple elements of language create a war machine that deterritorializes sense. As Brossard notes in her interview with Clea Notar, beauty is necessary "if you want to propose another version of reality . . . go beyond opposition and . . . make new propositions on love, power, sexuality, work, etc. . . . beauty and desire can open many more things than anger . . ." (142). This affirmative sense of beauty echoes Irigaray's argument, in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, that the beauty of new knowledge comes through the meeting of the incommensurable spheres of gender. But, for Brossard, such "étonnement" / "astonishment" opens in a rhizomatic multiplicity beyond the binary of sexual difference into "l'énigme de l'écriture" / "the enigma of writing" (*She Would Be* 14, 15). Beauty becomes, is the act of alchemical transformation of systemic, linguistic dross into gold (l'or, lore, Laure[s]) that cannot be recuperated into an economy of exchange and appropriation because there is no original subject or object for purchase

(hold).

Annamarie Jagose critically aligns “the lesbian relation where the distinction between self and other ceases to operate” (62) with the autoeroticism or “relation between commensurable” (61) and “identical” selves in Irigaray’s “When Our Lips Speak Together.” This relation, Jagose argues, is “structured by the trajectories of [Oedipal] identification rather than desire” (64). However, Jagose is unable to account for what happens in the subjectivity of an individual who is an unorganized, anti-Oedipal desiring trajectory between corporeal and textual bodies, a rhizomatic drift that connects to other texts and other bodies. Neither does she account for Irigaray’s discussion of intersubjectivity. Instead, she follows Kristeva’s theory of the *chora*, arguing that a lesbian figuration “between indistinguishable subjects is necessarily a representation of that relation either as prior to acculturation or as psychotic” (63). But a literary psychosis is not negatively inscribed as dysfunctional use-value and cowering or aggressive fear.²⁰ In “The True-Real,” Kristeva’s analogy between the psychotic’s displacement of reality that “places us in the series of the signifier alone” (*Kristeva Reader* 226) and the creation of plausibility in the signifier of literature allows her to argue that “artistic discourse”

²⁰Mélanie insists, throughout the novel, that one should not be held back by fear. That fear, I suggest, is of the dissolution of the subject in the construction of a lesbian body without organs. Fearing the loss of category, the loss of ego, identity, and identification would go too far, too fast, and lose lesbian specificity, could lead one to quietude (cowering fear) or the resurrection of exclusionary boundaries (aggression). Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of schizo-analysis is one that shatters the concept of ego-identification (the organization of the subject that prevents psychosis) and enables what Kristeva sees as the indistinct, pre-Oedipal psychosis of between-women love to become a powerful position for analytic decoding.

enables a “microscopic expansion of the ‘true-real’” (*Kristeva Reader* 227). Further, madness and hysteria (‘womb disease’) has long figured as a means of infecting patriarchal inscription with difference in feminist writing. In the beauty of a literary psychosis with no subject or object of inscription, there can be no autoerotic self-same.

The generation of difference through a resisting madness also connects with Deleuze and Guattari’s theory that the non-organized body without organs (the Brossardian cortex) of the schizophrenic has decoding potential:

. . . the schizo . . . reach[es] the furthest limits of the decomposition of the socius on the surface of his own body without organs. . . . He scrambles all the codes and is the transmitter of the decoded flows of desire. The real continues to flow. In the schizo, the two aspects of *process* are conjoined: the metaphysical process that puts us in contact with the “demoniacal” element in nature or within the heart of the earth, and the historical process of social production that restores the autonomy of desiring-machines in relation to the deterritorialized social machine. Schizophrenia is desiring-production as the limit of social production. (*Anti-Oedipus* 35)

Between full earth and full social inscription, the schizo can inscribe change, and, according to Dupré, this schizoid, doubled *je* of grammatical agency erupted in Brossard’s writing as early as *L’aube à la saison* (1965), *Mordre en sa chair* (1966), and *L’écho bouge beau* (1968) (88-89). As Parker writes, Brossard’s “*je fatal délire dans la beauté impersonnelle*” from *Installations* informs Brossard’s attempt “to (re)formulate a new subjectivity” that is “im-personal, fatal, intolerant of appropriation” (26). This

refusal of appropriation does not rely on terms of identity but on the becomings of a rhizomatic intersubjectivity of textual and corporeal bodies. Movement between incomparable elements cannot appropriate because there is no subject to enact the commodification that creates the displaced, organized object. The speeding movement of this rhizomatic intersubjectivity does not rely on “identification,” as Jagose avers, but on the link between “the analytic machine, the revolutionary machine, and desiring-machines” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 35) that deregulates desire in a lesbian schizoanalysis of a body without organs.

The central “plot,” if it can even be called that, of the *Le désert mauve* is lesbian “desiring writing” that emerges in the intersubjective event of translation between the different lesbian “interlanguages” of Angstelle and Laures. As Banting argues, an “interlanguage” is an event, an inscription of alterity, that occurs in a translation from an original language into a target language that does not exist, a (m)othertongue. As Brossard writes in “Les défis de la traduction,” “C’est dans l’aura des mots que se trouvent la conscience féministe et l’émotion lesbienne, parce que ce que nous vivons . . . n’entre pas dans l’esprit des langages ‘officielles’” (25).²¹ In *Le désert mauve*, Laure Angstelle’s “original” text is already inscribed by the differences of intersemiotic, interlingual, and intralingual translation that contaminates Derridean/Lacanian phallogocentrism and deforms it into a lesbian “interlanguage.” Maude Laures’s

²¹The aura of originality that Walter Benjamin criticizes as sedentary, in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” returns with the delirious *différance* of the impossibility of fixing the referent, and therefore subjectivity and desire, in a transparent language reliant on original referents and subjects or objects of action.

homolinguistic (intralingual, French-to-French) translation inscribes a homoerotic attraction of similar desire across differences encoded in a Deleuzian-Irigarayan linguistic and philosophic embodiment. The self and otherself — of Penelope Engelbrecht's theory of lesbian writing, or the lesbian narratological “doubling back as the subject/object of her desire” (Parker 135) that Parker, Marilyn Farwell, and Meese describe — inscribe the desiring relation between the fictional women writers as lesbian. Yet the subject/object binary destabilizes to a greater degree than any of these critics and theorists suggest. Laures's attraction to translate Angstelle's text produces a desire that has no unified subject, object, or source language because Angstelle's text is already an interlanguage. Similarly, her translation has no existing target language. Laures's desiring translation does not depend on completion and appropriation through the othering of Angstelle's text as a beloved or rival object, nor is Laures the invisible ‘nurse’ that makes the proper authority of the original subject accessible. Instead, the lesbian intersubjective event of translation in Brossard's text arises between the two and, therefore, has no author (subject). It exists intersubjectively as a virtual event that changes on each reading between the two texts and Laures's notes. Brossard's text also establishes an intersubjectivity between philosophic and linguistic differences, not sameness, that reveals the lesbian inscriptions in the passionate intensity and direction of the linguistic negotiations that open up the “vfenres” that would otherwise be relegated to an essentialist hors-texte.²² Moving between linguistic and philosophic differences without

²²Drawing on Brossard's figuration of chewing the words — “*l'éclat rageur des dents*” (*Le sens apparent* 9) / “*the glint of gnashing teeth*” (*Surfaces of Sense* 11) — and

hierarchical preference, Brossard opens the lines of flight that enable the inscription of lesbian “desiring writing” beyond a categorical sameness.

Mélanie’s refusal to call familiarly to the other — “Je ne peux tutoyer personne” (32, 51, 202, 220) / “I cannot get close to any you” (30, 46, 186, 202) — raises Farwell’s discussion of the challenge that lesbian writing puts to the binary division of subject/object, lover/beloved, narrator/narratee, writer/reader, I/you that deploys a Hegelian appropriation of the other and reduces all difference to a reflection of self in order to construct the subject. This is not simply the dissolution of opposition into the indistinguishable homogeneity that Jagose describes. That would only be an inverse reflection of L’homme long’s masculinist deconstructive gaze that kills Angela (the other, the outside) and leaves Mélanie swearing against this stance.²³ As Gould writes, “The

speaking “avec un accent” (*La lettre aeriennne* 90) / “with an accent” (*Aerial Letter* 105) in the female embodiment of language within the “vfentres,” Parker writes,

The lapse is installed through inattention, inadvertence or ignorance (of the proper codes). . . . The lapse, the supplement, the excess: when we cannot find the ‘right’ word and are forced to substitute another, the language is enriched by our *faux pas*. Similarly, if we stutter, if we speak with an accent, if we purposefully or accidentally misuse official grammar or linguistic structures, we force new modes and meanings from the symbolic system that governs our thoughts and words. Writing, translating destabilize semiotic codes. (214-15)

²³ Anne-Marie Picard argues that L’homme long’s disfiguration vient de la violence liée à son altérité irréductible. . . . C’est . . . dans un véritable hégélianisme où l’autre ne peut que vouloir ma mort, que Brossard situe sa théorie du regard: l’autre, c’est l’autre sexe, ou plutôt un simple corps habillé en homme. Car l’altérité n’est figurée que comme fantôme. Mélanie nous le déclare sans ambages: «Je ne peux tutoyer personne. Il n’y a pas d’altérité seulement une alternance dans l’apparence» (p. 32). Incursion du réel dans l’imaginaire lesbien du désert, l’homme va effacer Angela, l’objet d’un désir incertain, désir difficile puisque la séparation d’avec la première autre (la mère) n’est pas véritablement effectuée . . . (103-04)

trope of translation . . . engenders a series of reflections on subjectivity and alterity, unity and diversity, which place the work of creative reinscription at the center of a feminist reading aesthetic” (“Rewriting ‘America’” 197). In much lesbian writing, Farwell argues, “the narratee, as the auditor of the theorizing . . . becomes, in a revisionary way, part of the theory” in the shifting relation of reading/writing (35). Brossard’s narratorial relinquishment of the gaze in this novel and her support, permission, and French voice-over for Adrienne Jenik’s CD-ROM translation of *Le désert mauve* (*Mauve Desert: A CD-ROM Translation*)²⁴ that encourages the reader/spectator to direct the movement between the parts of the text acknowledge the importance of future and currently unknown speech acts (even unknown media of communication) to write alternative readings. In her translation notes, Maude Laures reads beyond the simple fear of heteropatriarchal violence against lesbian love that results in Mélanie’s refusal to call anyone “tu,” by showing the linguistic material connection of the appropriative “tu” (even

But alterity is more than the coding of the imaginary by differences of gender or sexual orientation as Maude Laures demonstrates in the combative imaginary discussion that the intersubjective Maude Laures-becoming-Angela has with Laure Angstelle. The opposition of absolutes on such levels as body/language, female/male, mother/child, self/other, truth/fiction is constituted within the very grammar of speech that constructs the effect of the subject. Language itself, therefore, must be changed to avoid the homophobic and violent philosophic positions that establish the ego-subject within the speech act and pose barriers to a non-Hegelian intersubjectivity.

²⁴Carolyn Guertin notes that Adrienne Jenik’s CD-ROM translation of Brossard’s novel “was an MFA thesis” in which “Brossard acted as a member of Jenik’s examining committee and her enthusiasm for the project is recorded in her correspondence with Jenik on the CD-ROM” (87). Because Jenik uses but does not identically reproduce the English and Spanish translations nor Brossard’s French novel, her CD-ROM version is a translation into “four languages: English, French, Spanish and multimedia” (Guertin 86).

by lesbian and feminist speaking subjects) with *tuer* (to kill). For example, the passages in which Laures considers herself Angstelle's adversary in the Hegelian language game of translation that will inscribe difference and in which she fictionally transforms into Angela and confronts Angstelle about her death are full of the pronouns of "je" and "tu" in the otherwise largely third-person translation notes. Laures's Angstelle swears: "Je ne t'ai point tuée. Cet homme t'a tuée" (88), virtually, marked you (*tatouer*) for slaughter.

Yet, when Mélanie and Angela address each other in the translator's notes, they speak as "je," "je," the respectful "vous," and "nous." Angela says, "Je crois que nous nous ressemblons" (138) and closes with an invocation to Veda, to immanence, and respect for the enormity of difference outside the inscriptions of any system: "Nous implorons de vous la pluie, le don, l'immortalité" (139). Dupré argues that, according to Emile Benveniste, *nous* is annexed to *je* in a globality of others that amplify not a plural complicity or a *nous* of manifestos or militantism (97). The singular and the plural agitate and nourish each other; the *nous* retains a dialectic function as a game and l'enjeu (elle en jeu; the stake in linguistic play) in interrelation (98). This respect for incommensurability inscribes the signs that connect in desiring production as a rhizomatic drift that enables Laures to open the horizon of hope by reading into the *différance* that is already imbedded in Angstelle's text and defer the logical outcome of murder. It also enables me to read Brossard's production of a lesbian desiring language as an event that sweeps between the texts of Angstelle and Laures, not as a transparent truth of Brossard's novel, but as a reading of what is already in Brossard's text from my contextually located position, just as Laures reads from her position in Montréal while trying to relinquish the

gaze. Banting writes,

. . . translation, in the sense I have developed throughout this book, can *only* be practised by the body. Translation, tongue tied to the signifier, can only pass through the body of the translator. . . . Not any body and every body. Translation will not pass through the ‘pure,’ ‘universal’ language of reason and its body, but only through the physical, temporal, particular body and its ability to write and speak in more than one language. (224)

The refusal of familiar address to the other of self and the use of first- and third-person (Lorna My-her) moves the construction of desire outside of the binary relations of speaker/spoken, refuses a resemblance of identity between the lesbians in the text, abandons the subject to the effect of inscription, and investigates the potential where, rather than a speaker/spoken division between the real and its representation, an alternating current circumvents the prohibition against a lesbian symbolic.²⁵

The words that are marked for intensive negotiation in translation into the “interlanguage” of each “author” mark the negotiations with lack undertaken in the desiring body of writing “sa langue” (63). As Sherry Simon remarks about the English text, Suzanne de Lotbinière-Harwood “seeks out every expression of gender-marking . . . [and] constantly sought new ways of transferring these gender-markings to English” (21). In the translation from Laure Angstelle’s psychoanalytic-deconstructive language

²⁵Within a Lacanian understanding of the symbolic, there cannot be particularly different, embodied symbolics, because the symbolic is the méconnaissance of the real in all its (universal) conscious representations.

influenced by Derrida and Lacan to Maude Laures's postmodern-deconstructive language influenced by Irigaray and Deleuze,²⁶ the same concern over the linguistic marking of sexual subjectivity and desire pervades the textual desire for women "to open new axes of communication, to create new subject positions and to contribute to the intellectual and political life of their times" (Simon 39).

In order to decode the commodification of desire as the split between the Oedipal subject and the unspeakable real, Laures uses the partial presences of other women in *Mélanie* to make *sense* (of lesbian desire). The lesbian intersubjects in *Mélanie* provide an alternative to Angstelle's glimpse of lesbian desiring language in the unspeakable separation between human knowledge and the real of nature. Angstelle's unspeakable real necessarily implies a teleological wholeness or depth — what Angstelle describes as "l'impression d'une ultime compréhension de la nuit, du désert et des hasard intimes qui se succèdent en nous comme une loi de la réalité" (42) / "the impression of an ultimate

²⁶Karen Gould sees this translation as a movement between "the American cultural perspective of Laure Angstelle to the Québécoise cultural horizon of Maude Laures" ("Rewriting 'America'" 187). However, the Germanic and francophone feminine marking in Laure Angstelle's name (l'or, angst, elle) suggests a Lacanian marking. The psychoanalytic focus of American deconstruction and feminist theory and the Québécoise emphasis on moving beyond lack supports Gould's perception of an American/Québécois division. Alternatively, in "*Le désert mauve* de Nicole Brossard," Charlotte Sturgess reads the translation as "l'horizon philosophique," a philosophic investigation into "la conscience et la réalité" (81), which betrays just how naturalized the feminist embodiment of the Derridean-Lacanian position in what Irigaray calls the "dark continent" has become. Sturgess's position that the doubling within the translation reveals an interiority or exteriority to the limits of representation in which "'la femme' est toujours représentée selon le discours dominant" (82), supports my reading of a noncategorical lesbian "desiring writing" that wafts in the negotiations each "author" makes within the discourse of her time.

understanding of the night, of the desert and of the succession of intimate changes that come up in us like a law of reality” (38). Leaping between the meanings of “l’impression” as Angstelle’s méconnaissance of the real and the collision between quantum particles that mutate, deform, and affect each other, Laures translates this ultimate knowledge into Mélanie’s permeable body without organs, a body inscribed or impressed by surroundings, night, discourse, and touch between women, in effect, an intersubjectivity of partial presences and becomings between women, discourse, and environment: “J’aurais l’impression de tout comprendre, la nuit, Grazie, ma mère, Lorna et toutes les autres qui vivaient en moi” (212) / “I would have the impression of understanding everything, night, Grazie, my mother, Lorna and all the other women living inside me” (194). Gould writes that Brossard privileges Laures’s ability through a “nontraditional, noncanonical, participatory aesthetic that valorizes the reader . . . rather than the author of the text” to open new, vital inscriptions (“Rewriting ‘America’ 198). However, in my reading, Angstelle’s text is not devalorized by this act. It functions as a strategic essentialism that clearly marks feminine difference from the dissemination of heteropatriarchal violence into the foundations of language and desire and is a necessary point in the flight between the two inscriptions that creates a nonreferential, uncommodifiable yet lesbian “desiring writing” that negotiates from within the contextual location to reveal, not what that body of language is, but what that body can do.²⁷ Speculating on the mobile space of her fascination, Brossard writes, “. . . si la forme

²⁷Deleuze and Guattari argue that the body without organs creates sites of intensity that emphasize the inscription of excitement rather than the essence or stability of

se transformait en un sujet, alors elle notait non pas le sujet mais comment la forme s'était transformée" / ". . . if [an element] transformed into a subject, she would then make note not of the subject, but of how the form had transformed" (*She Would Be* 6, 7), which emphasizes the negotiations the author makes to inscribe difference, rather than the essential content or description of character.

Both Angstelle and Laures produce a lesbian "desiring writing" in the space of excess permitted by their particularly located inscriptions. Angstelle's excess functions within a psychoanalytic-deconstructive language, while Laures's is contextualized within a postmodern-deconstructive language. Angstelle inscribes lesbian desire in the unknowable real that is outside the symbolic but that returns as a ghostly effect of *différance*, while Laures's translation dismisses the singularity of such binary presence and absence that would be deadly in a lesbian desire that appears within the irreducible heterogeneity of surface elements. Angstelle writes: "Le désert est indescriptible. La réalité s'y engouffre, lumière rapide. Le regard fond" (11) / "The desert is indescribable. Reality rushes into it, rapid light. The gaze melts" (11). Reality is unspeakable because language displaces the real in the méconnaissance of absence and separation. Since in Lacanian theory desire is founded in the split between the 'real' and the symbolic, in the continual push of the unspeakable unconscious against the speaking symbolic, the

substance. Similarly, I argue, the details, points, or meanings that are inscribed by the flights of lesbian "desiring writing" are somewhat irrelevant. They enable a contextually located writing, a writing from within, but Brossard places a nomadic emphasis on the transit between points, rather than on the points themselves, that create meaning in the space of deterritorialization.

horizon of desire generates continual reinscription. Angstelle appropriates unknowable nature and “hors-texte” to speak an essential depth of a lesbian-embodied difference that returns as the unspeakable otherness of language and deregulates the gaze from phallogocentric epistemology. Laures translates: “Le désert est indescriptible. La lumière avale tout, gouffre cru. Le regard fond” (181) / “The desert is indescribable. Light swallows everything, harsh gulf. The gaze melts” (167). Full presence of nature or language (God or the linguistic supplement for his absence, the representational *pharmakon*) establishes a binary solidity and divisive exclusion that leaves no entrance for a language of lesbian desire: “The gaze melts.” In Laures’s translation, the real is not singled out, because the heterogeneity of surfaces, textual events, topographic events, bodies, languages, future potentialities are all partial presences that enable a lesbian desiring language within the shifting angles of the real. There is no unknowable psychoanalytic depth, no phallus or ultimate truth that cannot be seen beyond the partial surfaces. Angstelle’s Mélanie’s uncertainty about whether Kathy ever wore a dress (“Je ne l’ai jamais vue” [11]) is the uncertainty of méconnaissance and masquerade that masks a deeper truth beyond the veil of the individual’s conscious perception. For Laures, it is irrelevant: “Ma mère ne portait jamais du robe” (181-82) / “My mother never wore a dress” (167). One costume or surface presence is not a full presence, is not all there is, but the perception and evidence are accepted at surface value.

Angstelle reveals lesbian desire as the returning effect of an excess of abjection²⁸

²⁸Renée-Berthe Drapeau discusses the power of Brossard’s spiral in *Le sens apparent* to move through multiple fetishes and risk abjection so that “l’imaginaire garde assez de

while Laures affirmatively figures it within the “v-fentres” of an embodied language. As Teresa de Lauretis argues at length in her lesbian interpretation of psychoanalysis, *A Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire*, the phantasm of the fetish as the whole body of woman that disavows castration is the third term that stands in for the phallus, but knows it is not, and negotiates the desiring lesbian subject (289). The fetish (with the active phallic genital valences) signifies the absence of the object of desire (the female body) and the subject’s wish for it (222) and creates the possibility for a desiring female subject who has previously been inscribed only as the object of desire (216). While de Lauretis argues that this “perversion” of sexual instinct diverts desire from its reproductive aim, it does not divert it from pleasure created by the fetish that lacks the paternal phallus (223). In Angstelle’s text, the grammar of gender inscribes the feminine in the unspeakable real (“la vie”) of bodily thirst (“la soif”) and pre-Oedipal indistinctness (“la nuit”) that leaves her with the dryness (“la sécheresse”) of a desired object rather than a desiring subject. But, when the object speaks her desire in the language of lack, she inscribes the ghostly effect of phallogocentric language’s untruth. Her abject focus on the castration of “une fille comme un mot” within the phallogocentric symbolic and her simultaneous insistence on the female body’s presence (“Cela était

violence pour éclater en imagination, et assez de désir pour conserver la lettre, le murmure audible” (13). In the passage “d’une fétiche à l’autre,” the law-of-the-father ceases to be the third term of social negotiation. Brossard “inscrit la *chora* archaïque dans la matérialité du signifiant. Comme le texte ne quitte pas la socialité, qu’il reste en bordure de celle-ci, le retour n’est pas total. Il s’agit de nier la castration tout en l’admettant.” This use of the fetish returns to the maternal phase outside of the monological symbolic while traversing the phallic that enables desire and makes it speakable (28).

certain . . . Les lèvres se plissent, craquent” / “This was certain . . . lips wrinkle, crack”) disavows the castration of her embodied language through a fetishizing fascination that constructs what de Lauretis sees as a specifically lesbian negotiation with psychoanalytic theories of desire:

Certaines nuits, la sécheresse était sombre et cela me fascinait de penser que sombre la sécheresse était un mot, tout comme moi j'étais une fille comme un mot dans la vie. Mais je pouvais exister sans comparaison. Cela était certain, aussi certain que la soif à venir quand on ne prend pas ses précautions avant de prendre la route et que les lèvres se plissent, craquent dans le vent fort et sec. (25-26)

Some nights the dryness was dark and it fascinated me to think that dark, dryness was a word just as I myself was a girl like a word in life. But I could exist without comparison. This was certain, as certain as the thirst to come when precautions are not taken before heading out and lips wrinkle, crack in the strong wind. (23)

Without comparison, the fetish (as a supplement) knows that it is not the phallus, does not want to have or be it, yet employs its ability to construct an Oedipal desiring subject that desires the female body. Angstelle's *Mélanie* deploys the language of the supplement, the Lacanian and Derridean figure of woman as the truth of untruth in language, to speak her embodiment of difference within phallogocentric language.

But in the Deleuzian relation of partial presences, language and body cut through full presences and inscribe and embody each other. Desire has no subject or object but is the interaction between unorganized, an Oedipal surfaces. Desire does not need an Oedipal organization of the drives to proceed. Without referring back to depth,

supplements are the signs of material bodies in the heterogeneous surfaces of inscription. Desire is the event of atomic change that emerges in the meeting between surfaces or bodies (of thought, language, individuals) not the gap that separates them. Laures translates:

Certaines nuits, le sombre desséchait les mots et cela me fascinait de voir la peau de délire tomber comme la fièvre à l'aube. Alors je pouvais exister sans comparaison, capable seulement d'une grande soif entre mes lèvres et le vent fort. La siccité. (195)

Some nights the gloom would dry words up and it fascinated me to see the skin of delirium drop like a fever at dawn. Then I could exist without compare, capable only of great thirst between my lips and the high wind. Dessication. (179)

Laures places emphasis on the body as an element that can connect with other elements both within and apart from language. Thirst is the territorial orality of the mouth which is deterritorialized in language. The body's will to survive is tied to a territorial contamination of any deterritorialized purity of abstract language or its reterritorialized sense within the phallogocentric system. The sound of "la siccité," embodied both in Angstelle's previous lesbian desiring language of abjection and in the material surfaces of the word without connection to meaning, opens lines of flight between the virtual "vfentres" in "mes lèvres et le vent" of lesbian symbolic intervention. In the atomic holes and surfaces of language in the mouth, "la siccité" becomes a conditional possibility ("siccité" [if cited]) of contamination ("sic") when cited again in the repeated performance of social and (inter)textual inscription in the "cité" (the city, the cited) of Brossard's other

works (see Gould, “Spatial Poetics, Spatial Politics”).

The Mélanie of Angstelle’s inscription locates an erotic lesbian interlanguage that opens through the pre-Oedipal figuration of Kristeva’s *chora*, an anterior foundation of the drives that always opposes and challenges symbolic formulations and wells through the sonoral and rhythmic slippages of poetic language. Angstelle writes:

Je parlerais d’Angela Parkins. . . . Grazie . . . me dirait: «Parle-moi, volatile et fébrile, sois serpent et lenteur dans la beauté, sois feu et rigueur. *Light me* pour que le désert s’abîme en nous et que renaissent les ultrasons de notre enfance. *Light me because I might* un jour.» (31)

I would talk about Angela Parkins. . . . Grazie would . . . say: ‘Talk to me, volatile and flushed, be snake and slowness with beauty, be fire and rigour. Light me so that the desert may sink deep into us and the ultrasounds of our childhood be reborn. Light me because I might some day.’ (28)

A sense of lesbian desire within the erotic drives of the real, unspeaking body relies on a return to past origins, the pre-Oedipal and uncoded sounds heard by the child in the pre-individuated womb, that provide potential for rebirth in a new lesbian inscription. While the intensity of lesbian erotic emotion in language remains in Laures’s translation, the past of uncoded drives completely gives way to future potential and decoding through multiple truths:

Je fabulerais. Je raconterais feu vif. . . . J’oserais dire tant de choses. Grazie m’encouragerait. «Encore une histoire, une autre version, ton vrai visage. Parle, dis-moi tout. Raconte aussi à propos de Lorna et de ta mère. . . . Parle-moi, sois

flamme, lèche, embrase pour que le mauve éveille en nous d'amples manières de songer. Allume en moi ce qui, peut-être, un jour.» (201)

I would make up stories. I would tell with tongue afire. . . . I would dare say so many things. Grazie would encourage me. 'One more story, another version, your true face. Talk, tell me everything. Tell too about Lorna and your mother. . . . Talk to me, be flame, lick, light up so that mauve will awaken in us wide-ranging ways of dreaming. Ignite in me that which, perhaps, some day.' (184-85)

Laures's translation opens gaps in past and present inscriptions that look toward an unknown future potential of nonsystemic writing/reading that decodes the echoes of what already exists in the symbolic. The ability of artistic production to evoke the unspeakable depth of drives in the *chora*, in Angstelle's discussion of "Dante's View, les plus beaux à Badwater et à Artist Drive" (31), becomes the enabling echo of rhizomatic surfaces that distort systemic intent ("tout en écho au sommet de Dante's View" [201]) that I have discussed previously with the Dante intertext and that maintain the material sense of sound.²⁹

In both texts, Angela is the most extreme embodiment of lesbian excess in language. In Angstelle's text, Angela follows the Derridean call to otherness as the elliptical return of the unspeakable in the living present of the performative where the "bar" is both the figurative bar of separation and repression in the symbolic and the literal lesbian bar culture that figures an intoxicated derailment that allows the emergence of an

²⁹This relates to Irigaray's criticism of the loss of sense of sound in Plato's cave that returns *alētheia* (and Mary) to phallogocentric sense (see above).

alternative discourse: “Le Bar commence à se remplir” (48) / “The Bar is filling up” (44).

Angstelle writes:

Angela Parkins chante passionnément, moitié *lipsing*, moitié *live*, la bouche arrondie par des sons éclatés. Ses mains virevoltent au-dessus de nos têtes. . . .

Angela Parkins . . . parle, parle, part vers je ne sais où, elle dit que ça recommence parole, sentiers, papillons et . . . tout devient impossible à comprendre, elle dit que ça explose dans sa tête et que tout est à recommencer comme un revers. . . . (49-50)

Angela Parkins is singing passionately, half syncing, half live, her mouth rounded by explosive sounds. Her hands swirl above our heads. . . . Angela Parkins . . . is talking, talking, takes off who knows where, she says it starts all over, speech, paths, butterflies and . . . becomes impossible to understand, she says things are exploding in her head and that everything must be attempted again like a backhand. . . . (45)

Angela begins to speak within discourse — the already known, the already said — syncopating the movement of her lips with recorded sound. However, in the elliptical return of *différance*, the living, performative act of repetition (“lipsing”) can never be identical with previous utterances. The reversal from emphasis on the text (“il n’y a pas de hors-texte”) to what is outside the text, the body of sound and Angela’s feminine body, enacts the second movement of deconstructive reversal and removes the authority of symbolic inscription. The symbolic is not a contained system, since it is affected by its embodied unknown materiality that, as Kristeva argues, inscribes paths into pre-Oedipal

nonsense and unspeakable drives. The words of the reversal in the text, “comme un rêveur,” destabilize and move outside of the text through the embodiment of sound, which produces an insubstantial and virtual sense of ‘comme un rêveur’ (like a dreamer), a subconscious bridge between the conscious symbolic and the unconscious, the third deconstructive move that raises a Derridean ghostly effect of otherness in the text by bridging binary separation and opposition in the choric performance of reading.

A Sapphic erotics of bodies dancing together and languages spoken together develops between Angela, an older figure, and Mélanie, the younger student-figure, which strengthens the sense of a lesbian erotics that develops in the semiotic *chora*. In Kristeva’s theory of the *chora*, this fluid, pre-symbolic space of indistinguishability and unspeakability enables the “homosexual-maternal” in the “phantasmatic[] . . . reunion of a woman-mother with the body of *her* mother . . . [a] homosexual facet of motherhood, through which a woman is simultaneously closer to her instinctual memory, more open to her own psychosis, and consequently, more negatory of the social, symbolic bond” (*Desire in Language* 239). In this space without symbolic distinction, Angstelle’s Angela says, “tout devient impossible à comprendre.” Kristeva argues that such primal regression into pre-Oedipal subjects “reflects the inherent psychosis” of motherhood propelled not only by desire for the phallic gift but also by “a nonsymbolic, nonpaternal causality” that “. . . women aspire to all the more passionately” than to the phallic desire that penetrates her body (*Desire in Language* 238-39). In the (m)othertongue, Angstelle’s regressive reversal into the *chora* valorizes such psychosis “without any *identity*” (Kristeva, *Desire in Language* 238) as the enabling textual figuration of hysteria in feminist writing that

reveals the lesbian otherness of an alternative female desiring language that is not Oedipal. However, through the masculinist gaze of L'homme long, for whom "il n'y a pas de hors-texte," the figure that most clearly represents complete otherness from symbolic inscription is death. Within Derridean deconstruction and Kristeva's theory of the displacement of the death drive of the body into language, Angela must die.³⁰

In Laures's version, Angela follows a Deleuzian program of becoming-animal by following the materials of language (sound) rather than the deep sense. Rather than Angstelle's folding between the binaries of conscious and unconscious, the feminine *chora* and the masculine symbolic, inside and outside, surface and depth, the concrete images of a Deleuzian becoming-animal³¹ proliferate in the "vfentres" between strange

³⁰Anne-Marie Picard sees Angela (presumably in both Laure Angstelle's and Maude Laures's versions) as part of the masculinist world: "une géologue qui connaît le désert, le monde des hommes, et maîtrise leurs instrument de mesure. Angela aurait pu jouer le rôle du tiers pour faire advenir Mélanie au symbolique et à la sublimation. . . . Mélanie ne trouvera donc pas de mot dans le désert, de mot pour son désir autre que celui de *désert*, immédiatement lié à celui d'*indescriptible*" (108). While I agree that Laure Angstelle's Angela relies on unspeakable otherness in order to speak feminine difference, Maude Laures's Angela speaks an animalist sound language that denies the loss of the (female) body (particularly the loss of the symbolic mother, as Picard argues). The translative movement between the two versions inscribes differently embodied resistance to the separation of bodies from language. Mélanie does read an embodied language and connection with the maternal past in Lorna, as Picard argues (108). But Angela does not teach her to suppress either that connection or its loss.

³¹In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari explain that becoming-animal is not "resemblance" (233), imitation, "dreams nor phantasies" (238). Instead, it is a series of exchanges in affective energy that "throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel" (240). They write:

The becoming-animal of the human being is real, even if the animal the human being becomes is not. . . . becoming is not an evolution. . . . It concerns alliance. If evolution includes any veritable becomings, it is in the domain of *symbioses* that bring into play beings of totally different scales and kingdoms, with no

animals (“chevreuil fou” / “crazy deer”) and quantum energy (“l’électricité partout dans le cerveau” / “electricity everywhere in the mind”) that produces a speaking animal (“ça braille, ça brame” / “bawling, troating”), which is neither pure nature nor pure civilization. It changes the body into the electric, speaking, thinking cortex (“Corps de voltige, corps de vertige” / “High-flying body, vertigo body”). Desire, as the electrical energy that attracts, speeds up, and spins out of the original nuclear orbit, rather than the gap between original need and its spoken demand, creates startling, new elements and subjectivities that are not unspeakable because outside language but strangely incoherent in the disorganized paths of virtual probabilities that cannot be contained by systemic regulation. As Jean-François Lyotard argues, the eventual breakdown of any system is the postmodern condition. Such atomic breakdown and recombination enables change.

Laures translates:

Le corps d’Angela Parkins cabriole, chevreuil fou aux yeux plein de lubies. Corps de voltige, corps de vertige. On nous regarde. On nous observe. La beauté soudain, sournement. Ça chante entre les lèvres d’Angela, ça braille, ça brame, ça psalmodie. Nos mains se croisent, se figent, longeant le velouté de la peau, se retiennent dans le tout bas des mots. C’est comme un grand tournoi des sons. Puis

possible filiation. . . . Accordingly, the term we would prefer for this form of evolution between heterogeneous terms is “involution,” on the condition that involution is in no way confused with regression. Becoming is involutionary, involution is creative. To regress is to move in the direction of something less differentiated. But to involve is to form a block that runs its own line “between” terms in play and beneath assignable relations. . . . We are not interested in characteristics; what interests us are modes of expansion, propagation, occupation, contagion, peopling. I am legion. (238-39)

sa joue enfin rapprochée. . . . Puis dans ma tête le brouhaha cesse et Angela parle d'exister. Elle dit que tout va recommencer, paroles, sentiers, sentiment, elle dit que pleurer oblige à ralentir, que dans la détresse tous les sons envahissent les mots, qu'ils sont tout crus dans la bouche, que ça devient alors difficile de se comprendre, . . . et que s'il fallait recommencer le monde, il faudrait encore des orages, de l'électricité partout dans le cerveau, elle dit qu'il faut espérer, que la mémoire peut encore accomplir de beaux ouvrages. . . . (219-20)

Angela Parkins' body capers about, crazy deer with eyes full of wildness. High-flying body, vertigo body. They are looking at us. They are watching us. Beauty suddenly, slyly. There is singing between Angela's lips, there is bawling, troating, chanting. Our hands meet, freeze, brushing skin's velvet smoothness, clasp each other in the low-throated whisper of words. It is like a great tournament of sound. Then her cheek at last close up. . . . Then in my head the brouhaha stops and Angela is talking about existing. She is saying everything is going to begin again, speech, paths, feelings, she is saying that crying forces one to slow down, that in distress all sounds overcome the mouth, that they are raw material in the mouth, that it becomes difficult then to understand oneself, she is saying that . . . if the world were to be attempted again, still more storms would be needed, electricity everywhere in the mind, she is saying that one must hope, that memory can still accomplish works of beauty. . . . (201)

Standing in the immense "brouhaha" that is outside the pure categories of both language and body, civilization and nature, Laures's Angela's ecstasy of lesbian desiring language

occurs in the virtual and quantum leaps in the bodies without organs of language and corporeality.

Laures's language performs an aerial flight, what Deleuze and Guattari call a becoming-imperceptible, which, like becoming-animal, is not a regression into something less differentiated but a "Hypersphere" at " n dimensions" that is "the abstract Machine of which each concrete assemblage is a multiplicity, a becoming, a segment, a vibration" (*Thousand Plateaus* 252). Laures's translation of Angstelle's performative lip syncing (that changes sense from within the regulatory laws of the symbolic) into "le tout bas des mots" begins a virtual process that leaps beyond body/language dualism and produces new sense rather than relying on archaic sense. The words shift meaning as they align between corporeal bodies ("low throated whisper"), material bodies of language (the English word for a musical brass wind instrument, *tuba*), and mental bodies of abstract thought (connecting with both the English and French words *trombone*, another musical brass wind instrument, but also, in French and on Canadian packaging, a paperclip, the deterritorialized metaphoric folding of inscription into an immense outside).³² The babble of tongues in "le tout bas des mots" enacts what Rosi Braidotti identifies as the nomadic transit of a polyglot (12-13) and the "transformance" that Luise von Flotow argues characterizes the lesbian abstraction in the collaborative work between Marlatt and

³²This sense of abstraction does not rely on a transparent referentiality or presume an original concept that is translated into language. Moving between the English words *trombone* and *paperclip*, words are abstracted into their fictional resonance, mined for their multiple connections, and put under erasure to create new sense, effect, and intensive affect that deceives language as transparent referent.

Brossard: they “focussed on their shared radical lesbian interest” that moves within but also beyond national and linguistic borders and reveal how the “contamination of language [provides] . . . an opening to difference, as contact between different cultures” (“Legacies of Quebec” 92, 93). Marlatt writes, it is in “this erotic transgression of borders, corporeal, cultural and linguistic, where meaning seeps through the poem from one mind to another” (“Translating *MAUVE* 73).³³ Women cannot rely on a masculine-inscribed “imaginaire collectif, national ou mythique” / “collective, national or mythical image-reservoir” to perform their becomings (Brossard, *She Would Be* 30, 31). The meeting of intersemiotic, interlingual, and intralingual translation becomes the nomadic war machine of lesbian “desiring writing,” the rhizomatic roots of Brossard’s “aerial” language that leap beyond systemic closure.³⁴

³³Since Marlatt has revised many of the essays that she includes in *Readings from the Labyrinth*, I cite this volume, rather than the earlier publication of this essay in *Tessera* 6 (1989).

³⁴Deleuze and Guattari also use the term “aerial” to describe rhizomatic meaning. Discussing the nonsystemic rhizomatic root in contrast to the arboreal tree that connects origin with present and future, or the supplement with a deep truth of meaning, Deleuze and Guattari write,

We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles. They’ve made us suffer too much. All of arborescent culture is founded on them, from biology to linguistics. Nothing is beautiful or loving or political aside from underground stems and aerial roots, adventitious growths and rhizomes. . . . Thought is not arborescent, and the brain is not a rooted or ramified matter. . . . The discontinuity between cells, the role of the axons, the functioning of the synapses, the existence of synaptic microfissures, the leap each message makes across these fissures, make the brain a multiplicity . . . a whole uncertain, probabilistic system. (*Thousand Plateaus* 15)

Brossard’s intensive investigation into “la lettre aérienne” and the roots of words, her use of the dictionary and literary sources, is not (as Jagose and Lola Lemire Tostevin would aver) a reliance “on originary/original meaning” (Tostevin 35). Brossard’s rhizomatic

Tuba (“le tout bas des mots”) is also a “straight bronze war-trumpet of the ancient Romans” (from the Latin root), an “8-foot high-pressure reed-stop in an organ” (from the Latin root), “a beatitude” (from the Arabic root), and “the name of a species . . . [of plant] from the roots of which an intoxicating juice is extracted” (from the Malaysian root) (*OED*). This electrical and polyglottal molecular activity in the Brossardian cortex becomes the deterritorialized and intoxicated lesbian body without organs as it abstracts across textual inscriptions of the angelus, Angela, the female embodied word, and beauty as the meeting of such incommensurable surfaces as the bodies of postmodern deconstructive Maude Laures, Lacanian deconstructive Laure Angstelle, and Petrarchan metaphysical Laura. The explosion of Laures’s Angela into a “beatitude,” or praise for the beauty of radical difference in the virtual angels of language, opens the horizon of hope in the lesbian inscription of the text beyond Angstelle’s necessary closure with the otherness of death.³⁵ Yet, unlike Deleuze’s program toward the dissolution of sexual organization in his figuration of becoming-molecular, in Laures’s Deleuzian-influenced

molecularity, as in the words “tout bas”/*tuba*, makes surprising leaps outside any systemic closure as I describe in this section.

³⁵Angstelle, the writer liminally located in Arizona, is trapped by the negative, stultifying American influence on deconstructive theory that leads to an aporia of political inaction, loss of ethical responsibility, and the impossibility of a nonfoundationalist lesbian or feminist erotics. Discussing the difference between Brossard’s movement across linguistic borders and nationalist issues of colonization, Parker writes,

As in other of her polysemic texts, boundaries here do not mark fixed frontiers of laws, but are rather like lines of force, dangling in a (magnetic) field of energy. On the negative side, there is the seemingly endless capacity of anglophone and United States culture to influence Québécois thought and production. But in this text the horizon, like the dawn, proposes inexhaustible figural possibilities . . . [that become] a space of lesbian imag(in)ing. (131)

text Angela's abstract lesbian body without organs functions as "a high-pressure reed-stop in an organ," a nomadic war machine that continues to emit a lesbian embodied sound and desiring abstraction that enables relation between molecularly different elements. The lesbian war machine abstracts into aerial flight but resists disappearance both in its intoxicated transgressions across the textual bodies of women and in its continuous warning of the need to remain conscious of heteropatriarchal violence. L'homme long's atomic universe would continue to murder and render women and lesbians invisible, would tend toward indistinctness and universalist reduction rather than molecular flight.

The Lacanian sense of otherness as the impossible, unknowable real body and the Kristevan sense of an unspeakable *chora* that Angstelle inscribes in Angela means she must die in a poststructuralist Derrideanism where "il n'y a pas de hors texte." She must submit to the Lacanian castrating law-of-the-father in the repression and displacement of language that in Derrida becomes the effect of reality created by a supplement that moves in *différance* with no real choric body or psychic depth outside language. In Laures's Deleuzian translation of poststructuralism, language and corporeality remain partial elements that both fold into an enormous outside. Laures's Angela submits to the law of quantum physics (not the law-of-the-father) where language, bodies, and subjects dissolve into atomic components that spiral out of their original orbits, connect with each other, and create something new that is not the fictional effect of the real, is not imaginary, but is the physics of reality itself in its polyvocal, intersemiotic, deregulated multiplicity. The disorganized lesbian body without organs opens lines of escape from the

violence of a poststructuralist Oedipal *l'enfer-mement* (hellish enclosure) that continues to separate bodies and languages and changes reality by challenging the systemic organization of language and bodies as coherent, categorical substances.

While writing a lesbian body without organs that emphasizes the movement between and beyond substantial locations and where there is no fixed subject or object of desire,³⁶ Brossard constructs a lesbian erotics of writing/reading in the shifting alignments of partially inscribed bodies (textual, corporeal, and abstract) of women that enact an eroticism of surfaces, rather than of essential depths, in the pre-texts of language: “Le dictionnaire, tant pis! Langue de feu, laïusseuse. Lai” (172) / “The dictionary, well too bad! Lingua of fire, long-spoken. Lai” (156). The previous masculinist inscription of speaking in tongues moves through an erotic materiality of *la langue* in the mouths of women modified by a feminized speech or gossip (“laïusseuse”), the looseness inscribed in *Mélanie*, “*filles de la nuit*” (220) [*une fille de nuit*, ‘a prostitute’], and poetic romances, such as the *lai*, written by and about women and that cross borders of national languages or systemic organization. The Breton *lais* of Marie de France, for example, mix Arthurian legend with the French language. Jane Rule’s *Desert of the Heart* mixes the homophobia of Roman Catholic Dante with the passion of agnostic lesbian desire. Djuna Barnes mixes spirit and animism, fear and lesbian desire, within American and French languages and contexts. Georgia O’Keeffe mixes the aridity, light, and death of the desert with vulval or

³⁶The sense that there is no object of desire draws on the difference between desire produced in an interaction and a desire that is formed from displacement and seeks an object to stand in for the originary “*petit objet a.*”

spiral shapes and flowers of a feminist strength, fertility, and vitalism. Gertrude Stein's repetition within shifting contextual locations enables an unspeakable lesbian desire to slip into language through what Brossard calls "formules magiques que la lesbienne en elle reconnaît dans un bonheur de lecture" / "magic formulas which the lesbian in her recognizes as a joy of reading" (*She Would Be* 120, 119, 120), the feminine angels of language. With such intertextual figures of transgressive lesbian meeting for pre-texts,³⁷ Brossard appropriates partial figures and sounds that inscribe women in Dante, Petrarch, Roman Catholicism, Derrida's Plato and *Spurs*, French and American avant-garde writing, and Deleuze's rhizomatic body without organs to create an aerial lesbian fiction théorique. Castle argues that even "realism" within lesbian writing appears "strongly fantastical" (88) because of its transgressions of phallogocentric constructions of mimesis. Yet Brossard insists that the fictions make us real, change the real, and inscribe alternative symbolics that detach and conjoin partial names and partial bodies so that

³⁷Lianne Moyes argues that Brossard's intertextual references create characters who exist beyond the text and create a lesbian community of writing/reading, although I would argue that this is a virtual inclusion of insubstantiality rather than a clear binary-based "beyond." Brossard's intertexts also include her own crossing of English/French feminist theory in her addition of the erotic into Virginia Woolf's theory that a woman-writer needs a "room of one's own" in *La lettre aérienne* and *Picture Theory*. See Lianne Moyes, "Composing in the Scent of Wood and Roses," for a discussion of Brossard's insistence that "a lesbian needs a bed, a work table, and a book" (214). In *Le désert mauve*, the rhizomatic modernist and postmodernist reference splits. Angstelle's Kathy opposes the Lacanian focus on phallic desire with the feminist focus on the need to become a speaking subject: "«Ceci est un homme, il faut un lit; ceci une femme, il faut une chambre»" (19) / "«This is a man, we need a bed; this is a woman, we need a room»" (19). In Laures's Deleuzian translation the sense changes to the man's need for rest (death of the subject) and the woman's need to move beyond the unspeakable and create meaning: "«Ceci est un mâle, il faut du repos, ceci est une femme, il faut du sens»" (189) / "«This is a male, rest is required, this is a woman, meaning is required»" (175).

“desiring writing” and subjectivity cannot be contained by an Oedipal organization and repression that totalizes its meaning (as full presence that inscribes lack).³⁸ Language does not create the effect of reality (as in Derridean deconstruction) but *is* real, political, and, in its always limited, partial constitution, contributes to the creation of reality.

Brossard’s figuration of a lesbian “desiring writing” has no fixed subject or object of desire, therefore, no implied closure within a women’s-only space of writing/reading. However, it still draws the reader into lesbian-specific *jouissance* because of the desiring production in the becomings between the partial surfaces of female bodies (corps, texts, abstract thought). As Parker insists, “if subjectivity is not monolithic or static, it is not entirely provisional or protean” (111). While Derrida argues that there is no promise of intent, identity, or identical reproduction (*Margins of Philosophy* 328), “. . . evaluations leave their mark on the scholarly signature” (*The Ear of the Other* 6). The manner in

³⁸Brossard insists that her fiction théorique is “lesbien plus qu’incestueux” (qtd. in Parker 42). Deleuze and Guattari write:

What [in the past] made incest impossible — namely, that at times we had the appellations (mother, sister) but not the persons or the bodies, while at other time we had the bodies, but the appellations disappeared from view as soon as we broke through the prohibitions they bore [the connotative shifting of bodies and terms that do not completely inscribe each other] — has ceased to exist. Incest has become possible in the wedding of the kinship bodies and family appellations, in the union of the signifier with its signifieds. (*Anti-Oedipus* 209)

Rather than upholding the incestuous relation of mothers and daughters implied in Kristeva’s theory of the *chora* or a full connection and identity between body and language as Deleuze and Guattari describe, Brossard’s lesbian “desiring writing” leaps on the seductive surfaces of partial connection and difference to inscribe lesbian sense within a break down of unified meaning in the textually inscribed signifiers of other texts, including the “kinship bodies and family appellations” that reveal the violence against women within the patriarchal nuclear family and the phallogocentric construction of sense.

which Brossard signs matters and inscribes a reading/writing space of seduction between women that is contaminated by and contaminates reality outside the specific locus of the text. The reader becomes lesbian: “Maude Laures s’était laissé séduire, *ravaler* par sa lecture. Il n’est pas toujours possible de rêver sans avoir à donner suite aux images” (59) / “Maude Laures had let herself be seduced, *sucked in* by her reading. It is not always possible to dream without having to follow through on the images” (55). A between-women space of desire is inscribed in most of Brossard’s works, particularly, as Marthe Rosenfeld argues, from the time that the female narrator re-emerges in *Amantes* (1980) from the poststructuralist dissolution of the subject in her previous works (201). Brossard writes, “Si je désire une femme, si une femme me désire, c’est qu’il y a du commencement à l’écriture” (*La lettre aérienne* 19) / “If I desire a woman, if a woman desires me, then there is the beginning of writing” (*The Aerial Letter* 43). The desiring connections between partial bodies of women (textual, corporeal, abstract) are not categorically closed, however, but the effect of a conditional grammatical body without organs — “Si je” (*La lettre aérienne* 19) / “If I” (*The Aerial Letter* 44) — within the seige (si je) of language that changes the symbolic construction of the reader’s subjectivity and desire, even if only momentarily and virtually.³⁹ Desiring alignments and transgressions

³⁹There is no solid body or essential subject in the writer or the reader. The confusion that this causes theorists of desire can be seen in the opposition between Barbara Godard’s claim for a lesbian desiring space and Alice Parker’s claim that it does not matter who the reader is. Godard argues that “meaning depends, as Wittgenstein puts it, on which language game one is in. Framing, perspective is the significant element. For language(s) is a filter that allows some things but not ‘everything’ to be articulated. Bodily sensations — pain, pleasure — are some of the things filtered out of the ordinary language” (“Producing Visibility for Lesbians” 126-27). But in *Le désert mauve*,

form a lesbian war machine of mobile substances, crossing the double-cross of inscription and categorical separation with intensive speed: “croiser le fer et le sentiment” (191) / “crossing swords and sentiments” (176). The sword of “fer” becomes the action of “faire” inscribed by emotional intensities that create use-value in the erotic becoming lesbian among the heterogeneous surfaces of writing/reading. As Brossard writes, prose enables “des valeurs et de l’émotion qui entrent dans la composition de nos vies” / “values and emotions that make up our lives” (*She Would Be* 50, 51). Deploying the possibility for changing reality within a linguistic and constructionist view of subjectivity, Brossard’s lesbian “desiring writing” circumvents the essentialism raised by the issue of reading “as a lesbian” by inscribing a becoming lesbian of the reader who is marked by the emotional and analytic values of lesbian negotiations with theories and fictions of reality and desire.

Brossard’s postmodern figuration of the spiral escapes what Dupré sees as the modernist rupture between body and language, inside and outside, real and symbolic (117) and creates a loving “délire” of connection. Faced with L’homme long’s

Brossard puts the reader into a poetic (not quotidian) lesbian language game of strife-torn, painful, and jouissant collisions of words, concepts, angles of vision among the partial bodies of women and (at least temporarily) inscribes the reader’s bodies. Parker writes that Brossard writes “in the light of a woman’s gaze . . . often addressing a woman/lesbian interlocutor” (31-32) and that her “concern is to empower women so that they can access creative energy: it does matter who signs, how s/he signs. In effect, anyone can read as a woman, as a lesbian, transgressively, in the lapsus” (220-21). Between these two arguments, I argue that it does not matter who the reader is because the reader becomes lesbian through the affective, insubstantial, nonsubstantive energy that creates paralogical virtual bodies both within and outside of the text. This is not reading “as a lesbian” because there is no such categorical substance or gaze in the text. Instead, it enacts a virtual becoming lesbian in the deconstructive negotiations that inscribe the reader’s affective relations.

postmodern, nuclear world of the masculinist vision of the death of the subject, Angstelle's modernist Angela, who relies on the separation between inside and out that enables the fold between to become the choric space that pushes bodily drives of difference into a phallogocentric language, can only die when the outside (the unknowable, essential depth of the subject) is annihilated. Laures's postmodern lesbian war machine of quantum translation and transgression across the bodies of language erases the figuration of seduction by the unspeakable female body as the 'other.' Such seduction only inscribes a violent separation between the 'real' and the symbolic. Lacanian separation regulates the production of desire, language, and subjects in an Oedipal system of female objectification, in which lesbian desire is psychotic and "a disappearance of eroticism as it returns to its source" (Kristeva, *Desire in Language* 240) or not desire at all but a system of identification that disappears when the category of identity breaks down. In Brossard's "délire," the absence of the 'tenor' (signified) in the choric opera house of Maude Laures's translator's notes shifts the agency to the vehicle (signifier) that drives the deregulation of patriarchal sense without relying on an essentialist outside. The heterogeneous surfaces of language with no originary intent open a space for unreading phallogocentric inscriptions of the textual, linguistic, corporeal, and abstract bodies of women by reading these bodies as signs, signifiers, surfaces that make a plausible "vréel" (Kristeva, *Kristeva Reader* 227) rather than a signifying sense that already exists elsewhere. A nomadic lesbian inscription within the "vfentres" appears in a quantum movement at the speed of light in which heterogeneous particles bind tightly around certain nuclei, speed up and spin out to connect with other nuclei, and enable what

has interpreted as absence to be read as quantum spaces. What has been unspeakable in a philosophy that categorically defines and separates bodies and languages becomes the desiring forces that are inseparable from the elements themselves in an embodied tongue (la langue). “Un pli énorme dans le silence” (200) / “A huge fold in silence” (184) opens into uncontainable and irrepressible energy in the silence that becomes the gaps of a quantum, affirmative life force where none of the surfaces are solid.

Maude Laures’s lesbian, affirmative postmodernism reflects L’homme long’s masculinist, deadly postmodernism with important differences. She describes her unreading actions and environment very similarly to that of the cigarette-smoking, white-shirted deconstructive/destructive L’homme long who stares rapidly out the window at the intense light of unspeakable reality, receives an envelope under his door that confirms his nuclear explosion (of the land, of anything outside textuality), and whose mind is obsessed by the words “*I / am become / Death*” (17).⁴⁰ In the following quotation, I strategically elide Laures’s affirmative difference in a linguistic body without organs to

⁴⁰Patricia Smart notes the parallel narrative trajectory of Mélanie and L’homme long “jusqu’à leur entrecroisement violent à la fin du roman de Laure Angstelle,” which inscribes an opposition between “«son histoire à Lui» et «son histoire à Elle»,” science and nature, figure and ground, body and language. Yet the similarity between L’homme long’s narrative and scientific investigation and Mélanie’s narrative and Maude Laures’s science of translation revolves around a major difference: Mélanie and Maude put binary opposition under erasure by inclusively moving between the contra-dictions within the binaries; L’homme long effaces oppositional difference by eradicating the other (effectively reinstalling an exclusive hierarchy). Lorraine Weir discusses Brossard’s earlier fascination in *Picture Theory* with the empty space of Joyce’s patriarch, Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, HCE, that “inscribe[s] . . . potential for a feminist white writing which is dominated by the hyperbolic form of the letter itself” (349). In *Le désert mauve*, Brossard again takes up that empty space for the inscription of a lesbian “desiring writing,” but the differences from the patriarch are also elaborated.

reveal her similarity to the figure of masculinist deconstruction that enables her war machine of unreading:

Elle ouvrit le tiroir, en sortit une chemise blanche, s’habilla, regarda un peu de réalité par la fenêtre . . . Alluma un petit cigare. . . . Le jour rutilant entra dans sa tête. Elle se pencha, ramassa une enveloppe, pensa que l’horizon était . . . pour les yeux. Puis . . . la main tendue vers les mots . . . «cela frôle le vide», eut peur un instant puis refocalisa sa pensée sur «douille et toutes les armes». (170-71)

She . . . took out a white shirt, got dressed, looked at a bit of reality through the window. . . . Lit a little cigar. . . . The glittering day entered her head. She leaned over, picked up an envelope, thought that the horizon was . . . for the eyes. Then . . . her hand tensed toward the words . . . ‘this comes close to emptiness,’ was afraid for a moment then refocused her thinking on cartridges and all weapons. (154-55)

Within the passages I elide, Brossard enacts the lesbian postmodern “délire” of connection rather than violent separation. She confounds the phallic gun of the symbolic bar that enables assassination (“le revolver”) with feminist revolution (“se révolter”) and the “délire” of a spiralling and elliptical “revolver.” This revolution in the return of sense without a transcendental signified enables her to think of the horizon as the uncoded/unclothed female body (“un grand nu de femme bien tentant pour les yeux” / “a great female nude very tempting for the eyes”) and stretch her body (hand of writing) toward words that can be rescued from death, aridity, corporeal separation, and unknown otherness. By reducing the heterogeneous surfaces of bodies and language to signs

(vehicles with no essential tenor) for the creation of plausible sense without the regulatory mechanism of repression that splits the signifier from the signified, she aligns the bed of desire with the revolutionary war machine of deregulating nomadic connection: “Le lit était douillet . . . «douille et toutes les armes»” / “The bed was cozy . . . cartridges and all weapons.” The bed of female desire (“douillet”) becomes the weapon of literary attack with the cartridge (“douille”) of the pen or printer. Transgressing *l'enfermement* (the hell of enclosure) by moving across language systems, Laures’s language abstracts into the phrase of feminist and peace protests, “arms are for hugging,” to create a virtual body, a virtual lesbian war machine of erotic struggle that enters language through the arms of an “intersemiotic . . . ‘writing under embrasure’” (Banting, *Body, Inc.* 198). The slippage that connects partial surfaces with speed, rather than violently separates, enables a leap between the inside and the outside, in which the envelope, the bodies of languages, political phraseology, and corporeal sexuality entangle to become “la partie indivisible” (173), the feminine “indivisible part” (157), a sexual/textual arousal of trembling that goes “à la tête” / “to my head” (*She Would Be* 104, 105). While Laures says her subject “frôle le vide” / “comes close to emptiness” (171 / 155), it is not dead and affirmatively inscribes a feminine imagination into the deserted and encumbered space that Brossard says characterizes postmodernism.

Transgressing categorical bodies (of gender, language, corporeality inscribed with heterogeneous terms of nation, race, class, culture) that separate and control subjects, objects, and desire, Brossard makes readable a lesbian desire and intersubjectivity that has no subject or object. Such lisibility that is not outside language or constructed in

unknowable lack is her analytic objective, but it is not an object or defined by a controlling subject. Maude Laures, for example, does not desire the object of Laure Angstelle's text or the subject of Angstelle. Instead, the reading, writing, analyzing relation that emerges in her translation of Angstelle's text is the energy of desire, which produces an intersubjectivity between the two. Similarly, the reading, writing, translating relation with Brossard's text produces the flash of thought and emotion on the intertextual and intersemiotic surfaces of languaging women, which, again, is the act of desiring production itself. The specific bodies that meet to produce lesbian desiring derailment in Brossard's writing — the strategic essentialisms in *Le désert mauve* of the angelus, Dante, Jane Rule, Jack Kerouac, Baudelaire, Bataille, Kristeva, Irigaray, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, Brossard's earlier texts, the figurations of lesbian drag — inscribe the particular historical, racial, linguistic, sexual, national, geographical, and political spaces within which Brossard writes. In her rhizomatic negotiation of culturally diverse writers and theories, the particular points of specific, territorial location destabilize into a nonfoundational and deterritorialized coalition politics. The incommensurability between the philosophic orientations of postmodernist Maude Laures and modernist Laure Angstelle suggests not only that lesbian "desiring writing" has no substantial meaning but also that women and lesbians must undertake continual intervention to avoid the violent patriarchal coding of any contemporary and always contextually embodied theory. Writing in an intersubjective space between Maude Laures and Laure Angstelle, Brossard creates a flux of circumstantial and insubstantial evidence that shifts meaning in each authors' negotiations with the particular patriarchal coding of their times to create a space

where the desiring nomadic bodies of lesbians in language brush against each other, connect across time and space, and bear witness to the neural flush of corps-texte between each other's noncategorical, desiring, lesbian presence.

Part III. The Hybridity of a Lesbian Ghost Language: Daphne Marlatt's *Taken*

Introduction

Julia Kristeva's influence on Daphne Marlatt's theory of language embodied with erotic drives is part of a growing body of critical assessments. Marlatt, as a theorist, draws on Kristeva to explain the presence of a speaking female body that expresses lesbian desire through a pre-Oedipal, pre-symbolic figuration in her early and often-cited feminist essay "musing with mothertongue" (1981). Her earlier lesbian and feminist linguistic politics clearly engage the work of Kristeva. However, her later "fictionalysis," or fiction-theory, contaminates the proper methodological constraints of any individual theoretical positions. In *Taken*, Marlatt's fictive and poetic leaps are not necessarily justified by or faithful to Kristeva's phallogocentric systematicity.

Marlatt's lesbian, feminist, and literary theory has moved a long way since the early 1980s. As Marlatt explains in her interview with Pauline Butling, the *Tessera* collective emerged out of a need, generated during Barbara Godard's Dialogue Conference (1981), for contact with the theory and "sophisticated, elegant analysis" of Québécoise writing. Marlatt wrote "musing with mothertongue" for that conference, and her knowledge of feminist theory has intensified in the last decade, especially while she was on the editorial board of *Tessera* (1984-91) ("Magazining" 123).¹ So, although Marlatt states she is not familiar with the theory of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

¹While Marlatt was well-versed with the theory of Merleau-Ponty and others influential to the language poetry movement, she says in her interview with Butling, "I've had to do a lot of reading of material which at first I didn't completely understand. When I look back at what I understood when I started *Tessera* and what I understand now in terms of feminist theory, it's really different" ("Magazining" 123).

(personal interview, 5 March 1997), she seems to have absorbed many of their theoretical positions through a critical and literary osmosis. *Tessera* provided the meeting ground for such interaction. Barbara Godard, Gail Scott, and Nicole Brossard frequently draw on the nomadic theory of Deleuze and Guattari to develop an antisystemic feminist theory and writing. Godard was one of the founding editors of *Tessera*, and Scott was the Québec editor while Marlatt was on the editorial board (“Magazining” 121). Marlatt says that the *Tessera* board tended to draw on the same group of Québécoise writers (“Magazining” 122), and Brossard is certainly a major figure in that group. Marlatt’s collaborative work with Brossard in the “transformance”² of *Mauve* and *Character* enacts the nonsystemic becoming through translation without fidelity that Deleuze and Guattari theorize as anti-Oedipal language. Deleuze and Guattari’s emphasis on the transformative possibilities on the surfaces of language, rather than through psychoanalytic depth, and their theories on the influence of bodies in language (which I will expand upon throughout this

²Editors Colin Browne and Michel Gay use the word “transformance” to describe the kind of translation they were looking for when they asked Marlatt to ‘translate’ Brossard’s *Mauve* for their chapbook series that was “a joint publishing venture between *Writing* and *NBJ* (*La nouvelle barre du jour*).” Similar to Pamela Banting’s sense of translation without fidelity to the original language and without an existing target language, Browne’s “definition of transformance . . . included ‘reading, writing, writing reading — that flicker pan-linear, lured beyond equivalence: a new skin . . .’” (*Readings from the Labyrinth* 70). Marlatt writes, “There is the horizon line of language which represents the edge thought comes to, and then there is the leap beyond that borderline of words, beyond the edge of the page, which i came to see as a leap beyond the separateness of two languages, two minds. For, paradoxically, it is through language which separates us that meaning flowers in the brain, seeping like a bruise from one mind to another in a transgression of limits. . . . i felt, in the process [of translating Brossard’s poem], as if my own cerebral cortex were being marked or written on” (*Readings from the Labyrinth* 72).

dissertation) are much more productive than Kristeva's in thinking through the rhizomatic differences that Marlatt transverses in *Taken* (1996) without systemic incorporation.³

Marlatt's⁴ resistance to any assimilated fusion between the intersubjective, lesbian bodies in *Taken* contradicts Kristeva's semiotic argument in "About Chinese Women" that positions a nonphallic, lesbian desire between mother and daughter in the unconscious, suicidal, death drive that cannot speak: "Others, more bound to the mother,

³This theoretical leap away from Kristeva and toward the theories of Deleuze and Guattari is also not without precedence in the criticism of Marlatt's works. Céline Chan places the characters Annie and Zoe, from *Ana Historic*, in the "kinetic, unbounded region" of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of nomadism that "lies outside the static enclosures of patriarchal power" (69).

⁴In "Mastering the Mother Tongue," Julie Beddoes takes Frank Davey to task — because of his reductive reading of *How Hug a Stone* — for conflating the autobiographical subject, Daphne Marlatt, with her fictional narrators and poetic speakers (78-80). While I agree with Beddoes' distinction between the "I" of the énoncé (author) and the "I" of the énonciation (narrator or speaker), I continue to refer to "Marlatt" when I am discussing the theoretical and political ramifications of Marlatt's work for two reasons. First, even when the narrator is inscribed as unreliable — or shifts between reliability and unreliability — the author inscribes some standpoint, no matter how fluid, that the reader must negotiate. I do not presume this standpoint to be a unified authorial position but agree with the mobility Nicole Brossard describes:

Between *Mauve Desert* (1987) and *Baroque d'aube* (1995) my body will have aged seven years. Am I the same woman, the same novelist? How many characters does it take to transform a body and alter our features, our expression? How many pregnancies to change a woman? How many orgasms to transform the first person singular? How many funerals to introduce life once more as a vital principle in the narrative? How many trips to the sea to imagine what silence will be one day? ("Only a Body to Measure Reality By: Writing the In-Between" 5)

I assume a nomadic *standpoint* that includes a shifting set of stances, beliefs, and positions, each with its written, spoken, contextual, and temporal enactment. Second, Marlatt refuses the binary separation of fiction, poetry, and autobiography in her transgression of and between genres. In effect, my use of the signature "Marlatt" agrees with Beddoes' criticism of Davey: "Many different 'Marlatts' could be constructed from combinations of other publications from the same 'signator'" and from different critical readings of the texts (79).

and more tuned in to their unconscious drives, refuse this role and sullenly hold back, neither speaking nor writing . . ." (*Kristeva Reader* 155). The lesbian erotics in Marlatt's text also resists Kristeva's phallic construction of a speaking and desiring lesbian subject through "identification with the father" that suppresses the pre-Oedipal "dependence on the mother's body," obliterates "her own body," gains "symbolic mastery," and erotically pursues the mother or her substitute object (*Kristeva Reader* 149). Kristeva maintains that the "symbolic order" of chronological time and communication is "the paternal order" (*Kristeva Reader* 152) and that "a woman cannot be part of the temporal symbolic order except by identifying with the father. . . . [I]n patrilinear society . . . woman is a specialist in the unconscious," the truth of untruth in the symbolic order (*Kristeva Reader* 154). Yet she concludes "About Chinese Women" by arguing for a feminine revolutionary agitation that "refuse[s] both these extremes" of a feminine unconscious and a masculine symbolic to enable the speaking position of "politics and history . . . in order to escape a smug polymorphism . . . [and] gain entry to social practice" (*Kristeva Reader* 156). In "Motherhood According to Bellini," Kristeva continues to align the lesbian facet of maternity and the attraction between mother and daughter with a pre-Oedipal, pre-linguistic, pre-individuated difference of bodily drives in the *chora* that resist the linguistic, phallic objectification of the symbolic: "*The homosexual-maternal facet* is a whirl of words, a complete absence of meaning and seeing; it is feeling, displacement, rhythm, sound, flashes and fantasied clinging to the maternal body as a screen against the plunge" (*Desire in Language* 239-40). In Kristeva's theories, there are no speaking lesbian daughters who are not psychotic, neurotic, or phallic.

In one way or another, all of Marlatt's works deconstruct binary opposition, and her antisystemic drift away from Kristeva's theory may be in part a response to the intensely divided critical war that preoccupies the critical reception of her works. Some critics draw on the pre-symbolic *chora* of bodily drives to posit a utopic, lesbian space apart from patriarchal regulation. Witness Dennis Cooley on *Ana Historic*: "Everywhere Marlatt seeks the essential self, unadulterated by the wrong structures of knowing. Her dream is Edenic. She dreams of return, imagines she will be restored" (78). Janice Williamson reads lesbian affirmation into the "utopian 'no place' space . . . [of] idealized ahistorical mythmaking" in *Touch to My Tongue* (173). The nay-sayers also find purchase in Kristeva's theory of a semiotic *chora* that produces difference in language and unconscious structures.⁵ Criticizing "'First-World' feminist practices of a feminine *jouissance* in the 'Third World' arena," Sarah Harasym criticizes Marlatt's essentialist reduction of differences between women (that could only be perceived in what Kristeva calls the paternal symbolic of history and politics), which results in an "idealiz[ation of] the other as a timeless metaphysical subject" (122, 123). Lola Lemire Tostevin calls Marlatt to task for the creation of a "utopian" lesbian desire (38) in *Touch to My Tongue* through "a return to the original space of Woman that she longs for" (36) and that is "the unspeakable," pre-symbolic *chora* of "a no-name woman" (37). In *Taken*, Marlatt

⁵In "Motherhood According to Bellini," Kristeva writes: "If it is true that every national language has its own dream language and unconscious, then each of the sexes — a division so much more archaic and fundamental than the one into languages — would have its own unconscious wherein the biological and social program of the species would be ciphered in confrontation with language, exposed to its influence, but independent from it" (*Desire in Language* 241).

affirmatively responds to such critique. Her repeated scepticism about a utopian space for the development of a lesbian subject outside of discursive construction contests

Kristeva's idea of a feminine pre-symbolic *chora* that influences but is outside a paternal symbolic. Further, Marlatt's movement beyond *the* singular difference of gender in the development of the intersubjects in *Taken* contradicts the whole of psychoanalytic theory's focus on gender as the central difference in the development of a subject. Something other than interpretation through Kristeva's theory of the *chora* seems called for.

Deleuze and Guattari's anti-psychoanalysis and anti-philosophy makes more sense in relation to the intersubjects of *Taken* that and who circulate without priority. An intersubjective space of articulation is another way to address the mobility of the symbolic that Kristeva argues forms between the linguistic *thetic* and the corporeal semiotic,⁶ without relying on depth psychology. For Kristeva, the mobility of the

⁶The word *thetic* comes from *thesis*: a displacement of the individual's disorganized and fragmented body into a single, organized body, first through the mirror stage and subsequently through castration, or the displacement of desire into language. Kristeva explains in "Revolution in Poetic Language":

The first, the mirror stage, produces the 'spatial intuition' which is found at the heart of the functioning of signification — in the signs and in sentences. From that point on, in order to capture his image unified in a mirror, the child must remain separate from it, his body agitated by the semiotic motility we discussed above, which fragments him more than it unifies him in a representation. . . . Captation of the image and the drive investment in his image, which institute primary narcissism, permit the constitution of objects detached from the semiotic *chora*. Lacan maintains, moreover, that the specular image is the 'prototype' for the 'world of objects.' Positing the imaged ego leads to the positing of the object, which is, likewise, separate and signifiable. (*Kristeva Reader* 100)

Following the mirror stage that enables the positing of a false but signifiable entity based on the separation between the bodily drives and the signified object, language increases

symbolic depends on its position as a link between the fragmented, disorganized subject of heterogeneous, biological, bodily drives and the organized castration and displacement of language from the 'real' signification of the subject. For Deleuze and Guattari, an individual develops, but there is no organization of the subject that creates the binary split of Kristeva's theory. Bodies are also without the essential drives of organs that propel the speaking subject's deconstruction of language and misrepresentation in Kristeva's theory.

On the anti-psychoanalytic surfaces with no depth, ". . . there is no distinction between the natural and the artificial. However many dimensions it may have, it never has a

the separation, creating a desire based on lack, or separation from its primary signified. Kristeva writes:

Castration puts the finished touches on the process of separation that posits the subject as signifiable, which is to say, separate, always confronted by an other: *imago* in the mirror (signified) and the semiotic process (signifier). As the addressee of every demand, the mother occupies the place of alterity. Her replete body, the receptacle and guarantor of demands, takes the place of all narcissistic, hence imaginary, effects and gratifications; she is, in other words, the phallus. The discovery of castration, however, detaches the subject from his dependence on the mother, and the perception of this lack [*manque*] makes the phallic function a symbolic function — *the* symbolic function. This is a decisive moment fraught with consequences: the subject, finding his identity in the symbolic, *separates* from his fusion with the mother, *confines* his *jouissance* to the genital and transfers semiotic motility on to the symbolic order. Thus ends the formation of the thetic phase, which posits the gap between the signifier and the signified as an opening up towards every desire but also every act, including the very *jouissance* that exceeds them. . . . For there to be enunciation, the *ego* must be posited in the signified, but it must do so as a function of the *subject* lacking the signifier. (Kristeva Reader 101).

The symbolic becomes the space that negotiates the very inadequacy of the signifier (*thetic*) to speak the truth of the divided self who recognizes the distortion in the mirror of language. Kristeva argues that this enables the speaking subject to displace the death drive of the body onto language itself, so that the destructive drive becomes the continual challenge to thetic signification within the symbolic. The symbolic becomes the hinge that negotiates between the bodily *chora* and the ability to signify through the displacement of the thetic.

supplementary dimension to that which transpires upon it" (*Thousand Plateaus* 266).

Bodies still speak a semiotic language, but, for Deleuze and Guattari, "An assemblage has neither base nor superstructure, neither deep structure nor superficial structure; it flattens all of its dimensions onto a single plane of consistency upon which reciprocal presuppositions and mutual insertions play themselves out" (*Thousand Plateaus* 90).

Marlatt's critical analysis of nostalgic desire produced in the psychoanalytic emergence of a speaking subject relates to Deleuze and Guattari's political resistance to Oedipal reterritorialization that castrates and represses the social subject. Their anti-Oedipal theory of the territorial orality of bodies and the deterritorialization of bodies in language provides a framework for examining Marlatt's investigation of semiotic bodies.⁷

⁷As Fred Ribkoff explains, Marlatt's investigation of an embodied language dates back to such early works as *Rings* (1971) and the influence of Charles Olson's theory of proprioception. However, Olson's theory draws on the Heideggerian concept of *Dasein*, as Doug Barbour explains ("The Phenomenological I"), which relies on an essential being in the world that can only be approximated through language. If not earlier, Marlatt's contemporary deployment of bodies in language and language of bodies does not enact the phenomenological attempt to express a preexisting essence. Contrary to Ribkoff's analysis, she does not "extend and express (press) herself out into space — onto the page — because the language is common, like the skin, something we are born into and breath through" (Ribkoff 242). Even as early as *FRAMES of a story* (1968), Marlatt decodes social regulation through language by exploring the way what is taken as familiar (such as the hysterical woman or the objectifying definition of women as the embodiment of lack and the threat of castration) becomes strange and horrifying. She is not "The [Olsonian] proprioceptive writer . . . at home in her body" (Ribkoff 232), "at home in place, community, and language . . . writing . . . a 'poetics of dwelling'" (Davey, *Writing Life* 19) as she reveals in her discussion with Brenda Carr of the gendered difference and distance she felt from the proprioceptive theory of the *TISH* writers ("Between Continuity and Difference" 99). As Lianne Moyes writes, the space of the *unheimlich* or unhomely reveals the presence of what has been silenced/erased ("Writing, the Uncanniest of Guests"). Embodied language creates rather than reflects the real and enables change. Lorraine Weir argues:

Marlatt's theory of communication is primarily semiotic, not phenomenological.

In *Taken*, bodies and languages are different signifying systems but they connect without relying on the depth psychology that keeps lesbian (nonphallic) desire in the unspeakable semiotic *chora*. As I outline throughout Part III, Marlatt's desiring leap between the partial presences of corporeal, linguistic, gendered, geographical, historical, racial, class-based, literary, and abstract bodies that cannot be categorically contained create affective intensity that destabilizes the sedimented matter of epistemological definition. The meaning of *desire* changes from the psychoanalytic need to supplement the inadequacy of representation created by the Oedipal separation of (maternal and originary) bodies and language to the anti-Oedipal connecting leap between surfaces that create new becomings. Hybridity, in Marlatt's *Taken*, is not simply a contamination of one side of the binary with the other in the opposition of different nations or races, body and language, past and present, East and West, bourgeoisie and servant class, theory and fiction, but also a contamination⁸ between these categories that prohibits systemic closure

Although in a Journal entry for 22 February 1970 she experiments with Heidegger's distinction between earth and world (*WM* 125), she does not sustain the paradigm in her work. In the same Journal entry, in fact, she opposes the Heideggerian paradigm to the semiotic one. . . . The extent to which things are separated out from human perception in Marlatt is precisely an index of the non-phenomenological nature of the work. (63n3)

Throughout this dissertation I rely on Marlatt's investigation of body-language interaction as that which Elizabeth Grosz repeatedly defines as a Möbius strip (*Volatile Bodies* and *Space, Time and Perversion*). This figuration inscribes bodily difference in language and vice versa and suggests the two are neither identical nor entirely different and separate.

⁸See my definition of the postcolonial meanings of the term *contamination* in the subsection of "Rhizomatic Connections" entitled "The Postcolonial Theory of Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak."

and epistemological mastery. Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the body without organs that rhizomatically leaps across categorical systems on a deterritorialized "plane of consistency" (*Thousand Plateaus* 269-70) addresses the complexity raised in *Taken* much more consistently than Kristeva's phallogocentric theory. The rhizomatic intersections on the horizontal "surfaces of sense" (Brossard) produce continuous becomings that differ from any of the original bodies and categories that are crossed.

To discuss such rhizomatic transgression across sign systems without fidelity to originary signification in Marlatt's *Taken*, I borrow and twist aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's anti-Oedipal theory; Jacques Derrida's deconstructive philosophy; Luce Irigaray's, Hélène Cixous's, Gayatri Spivak's, and Kelly Oliver's feminist deconstruction; Homi Bhabha's, Robert J.C. Young's, and bell hooks's postcolonial theories of hybridity; Pamela Banting's intersemiotic theory of translation; and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theory of the homosexual closet as a space of sexual hybridity. My own theoretical intertextuality, in Kristeva's sense of a "transposition of one (or several) sign-system(s) into another" ("Revolution," *Kristeva Reader* 111), articulates a mobile rhizomatic theory that (inter)changes the sources and derails any singular doxa. Each of these theories deconstructs binary opposition from very different locations. Yet Sedgwick's description of the inescapable homosexuality inscribed into binary opposition enables me to read lesbian desire as a ghostly haunting that persists throughout the rhizomatic transgression of *Taken* but never reterritorializes itself as a final target.

Pamela Banting argues that the female body in language creates an intersemiotic translation that begins to inscribe a (m)other tongue that does not exist as a target

language. Alternatively, in “‘From Radical to Integral’: Daphne Marlatt’s ‘Booking Passage,’” Pauline Butling suggests that Marlatt’s exploration of the semiotic erotic connections in Kristeva’s theory of the *chora* that moves through the sound, rhythm, and texture of language enables a “[C]oming out of the closet,” a “coming into language,” a “‘coming’ in language” (168). Butling argues that semiotics enables Marlatt “‘To write in lesbian’” as she insists in *Salvage* (118). Yet a “‘coming’ in language,” or a lesbian “desiring writing,” is the continual production of new sense in the intertextual, intersemiotic, and interlingual spaces between sign systems that enables a politics of desire. To write “in lesbian” suggests a language as sedimented in its coding and syntax as the paternal symbolic that lesbian and feminist writers have been trying to escape, rather than a mobile translation between systems that has no object, no existing target language, *because* it is that flight between heterogeneous signs of different lesbian productions in heterogenous sign systems. These proliferating surfaces of inscription in *Taken* open mobile spaces between such rigid hierarchical binaries as real/symbolic that structure the violent metaphysics of phallogocentric Western epistemology and narrative knowledge.

Writing in the space between signs and systems, Marlatt levels the ground to write female, lesbian, and linguistic desire out of an Oedipal colonization that inscribes a painful lack and represses heterogenous differences. The space between is a hybrid space that touches both sides of such separated binaries as body and language. But, in *Taken*, body and language are already both hybrid spaces of difference. In the colonial setting of the novel, the space between the colonizer/colonized clearly connects to Homi Bhabha’s

theory of hybridity as a contamination of both sides by the other that changes the original nations. Such hybridity allows Marlatt to undertake an anti-racist interrogation of difference within whiteness. The hybrid space between categorical signs also destabilizes a categorical sexuality. Sedgwick argues that, in the nineteenth-century, the equation of epistemology with sexuality developed into an obsession with the distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality. The ghost of the homoerotic and homosocial closet now contaminates all twentieth-century Western investigations of binary opposition. Further, as Robert J.C. Young argues (see chapter 8, “The Ghostly Haunting of Lesbian Desire in the Closet of Hybridity”), theories of racial hybridity are also saturated with hidden homoerotic attraction. In *Taken*, Marlatt writes a lesbian ghost language that resonates through the closet as the hybrid space between binary oppositions, even though the first-person narrator, Suzanne, is ‘out’ of the closet.

Unlike the commodification of a ‘queer nation,’ the haunting by a lesbian ghost language has no substantial cultural location, inscribes no categorical identity, and cannot contain or be contained by other differences that it touches in the erotic *délire* of an interlanguage. Marlatt inscribes a between-women intersubjectivity on a lesbian continuum that flows between the binaries of mother/daughter, self/other, heterosexual/homosexual, and figure/ground. This desiring intersubject emerges through the intensive connections of partial presences rather than through inadequacy, absence, lack, and separation. The meeting between the surfaces of always already heterogeneous signs of bodies and languages enables a mobile signification that not only allows libidinal energy to enter language but also allows political analysis to become part of desire.

Marlatt's "kinematics," her science of movement that resists identity politics (*Readings from the Labyrinth* 206), opens the door to reveal the insubstantial bones drifting into ghostly dust and the shifting relations between the so-called skeletons in the closet. A lesbian desire emerges under erasure as the ghost of the closet that leaps between and continues to haunt multiple binaries.⁹

⁹Drawing on Monique Wittig's concept of *lesbian* as "beyond the category of [binary] sex" and Teresa de Lauretis's interpretation of Wittig's position as "the consciousness of a 'something else,'" Keith Green and Jill LeBihan argue that, in *Ana Historic*, Marlatt's shifting feminine pronouns create a disruption of otherness in the movement between *I*, *you*, and *she*, who is "the 'other' of discourse, the third person" (442). Green and LeBihan suggest this creates the "unresolved positioning of a lesbian subjectivity" that reinstates women and lesbians "into a symbolic system, a recognition that is denied women, and lesbians in particular, within the patriarchal Symbolic" (443). However, in *Taken*, Marlatt avoids the specularizing focus of the uncontainable as a reterritorialized lesbian "elsewhere" by diffusing categorical escape into particularly located issues that arise in relation to nation, colonization, decolonization, race, masculinity, and geography. This, I argue, creates the space of haunting, where the lesbian figure is always put under erasure and brought to the categorical limit where it becomes something else and, vice versa, where something else reaches its own categorical limit and becomes lesbian.

Chapter 8. The Ghostly Haunting of Lesbian Desire in the Closet of Hybridity

The ghost of the homosexual closet haunts both the epistemology of nineteenth-century distinctions between heterosexuality and homosexuality and colonial theories of hybridity. It ‘haunts’ through a catachrestic foundation because neither heterosexuality nor homosexuality, colonizer nor colonized, can be located as original or copy. The central section of the three-part novel *Taken*, the central fold, focuses on Charles’s violent inscription into the binary separation of gender. Yet what makes him a speaking subject, what humanizes him, is not his gendered inscription but his deterritorializing resistance to the violence of a heterosexually gendered, masculine subject. Through an intertextual connection of Charles with the homoerotic Charlus of Marcel Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past*, Marlatt establishes the homosexual closet as the central textual focus in the shifting space between binary inscriptions. An inversion of the binaries, which would privilege homosexuality or femininity, does not change the violence of symbolic inscription. The inversion of the hierarchical binaries in the war narrative of Japanese invasion, for example, simply reverses the positions of colonizing power in *Taken* rather than changing the dynamics of violence. But the place between genders and sexualities that undoes the violence of categorical inscription opens a deterritorialized, micrological space for a nonfoundational politics¹ that can combat the contextually heterogeneous but

¹As I explain in “Toward a Desiring Intersubjectivity,” Judith Butler describes an “antifoundationalist approach to coalition politics” as coalition work that presumes no basis of unity (*Gender Trouble* 15). My reference to a *nonfoundational* coalition politics differs from Butler’s use of “antifoundationalist” in the deconstructive sense that Gayatri Spivak proposes when she argues that deconstruction raises issues we cannot *not* help but address (*Outside* 4-5). This is not “anti” foundation but a catachrestic proposition of

nonetheless colonizing forms of noncategorical patriarchal regulation. Without acknowledging the insubstantial diffusion and noncategorical differences in the functions of patriarchy, feminist agitation against such colonization can be easily dismissed as essentialist and inconsequential. The political agency for postcolonial change depends on the relinquishment of the specular gaze that organizes the subject. Without the micrological contextuality of a nonfoundational politics, an imperialist appropriation of the hybrid space between the binaries can as easily continue the colonization of the subject as open lines of decolonizing escape. Marlatt acknowledges this imperialist reterritorialization through systemic complicity in Suzanne's investigation of Esme's and Charles's reproduction of racist, homophobic, and sexist inscriptions in the masculinist and Eurocentric desire for the other. Yet she also examines nonsystemic lines of flight in the contamination of hybridity that begin to inscribe difference in their whiteness and heterosexuality. In a translation of hybridity without fidelity to an originary genealogy (sources, drives, parents) and intent (the 'real' of displaced signification), Suzanne mines the heterogeneous inscriptions of colonization for the development of an anti-racist lesbian hybridity that crosses but cannot contain differences.

In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues that, along with Foucault's analysis of the nineteenth-century reduction of knowledge to sexual knowledge and secrets to sexual secrets, homosexuality "was distinctively constituted as

multiple constructions, or foundations, that bring each other to the limit where they cross into and against each other. A singular foundation or its originary truth cannot be presumed, yet each stands as a "petit récit" (Lyotard) to assert the specificity of historical conditions of difference.

secrecy: the perfect object for the by now insatiably exacerbated epistemological/sexual anxiety of the turn-of-the-century subject" (73). Thus, she argues that "the most crucial sites for the contestation of meaning in twentieth-century Western culture" cluster around the issues of secrecy/disclosure and private/public that are not at all "free-floating" but "quite indelibly marked with the historical specificity of homosocial/homosexual definition . . ." (72). Sedgwick insists that an anti-homophobic analysis must be undertaken in twentieth-century discussion of oppositional binaries in order to avoid unknowing complicity (73). In *Taken*, the lesbian first-person narrator writes her love for her mother, Esme, as she simultaneously writes to and of her absent lover, Lori, who cannot speak (on the phone) because she is closeted in a homophobic family narrative. The lesbian 'secret,' unspoken in the closet of an unspeakable *chora* that inscribes mother-daughter relations in the heteropatriarchal family romance, emerges as the space between the binaries of body/language and heterosexual/homosexual. By writing between the narratives of a psychoanalytic family romance and an overtly political prohibition of desiring lesbian subjects, Suzanne reveals the political agenda behind the psychoanalytic binary opposition of body and language. The reproduction of motherhood through a heteropatriarchal enclosure of unspeakable lesbian desire in the polymorphous drives that are displaced by the development of a speaking, coherent subject contains lesbian desire as the *chora* of essentially unspeakable bodily depth and origin. Suzanne resists such containment by inscribing her lesbian love in a deterritorialized flight of corporeal and linguistic signs that establish intersubjective relations with the mother as well as with "you," who is both the reader and the absent lesbian lover, Lori. As Sedgwick writes,

“Revelation of identity in the space of intimate love effortlessly overturns an entire public systematics of the natural and the unnatural, the pure and the impure” (76). Through the deterritorialized intersubject, the heterosexuality of the mother and the potential heterosexuality of the reader are also contaminated by issues of “transference and countertransference” because, as Sedgwick explains, “erotic identity . . . can never not be relational” (81). Unlike the reterritorializing location of the reader as a lesbian in the ‘extratextual’ poem that addresses “we,” “she,” “me,” and “you,” with “your desire, reading / us into the page ahead,” in *Ana Historic*, the reader of *Taken* is brought into a lesbian erotics without colonization. The production of the subject via sexuality, in Alfred, Lord Douglas’s assertion that he *is* “‘the Love that dare not speak its name’” (qtd. in Sedgwick 74), becomes displaced by analogy in Marlatt’s *Taken* as a ghostly lesbian presence that emerges under erasure in a reading/writing of maternal and homoerotic love that is always already a hybrid meeting of differences.²

²Linda Hutcheon defines Marlatt’s acknowledgement of “a particular audience” as a postmodern and feminist strategy: “Daphne Marlatt’s *Touch to My Tongue* overtly excludes the male and perhaps even the heterosexual female reader. This kind of particular address foregrounds and at the same time debunks the humanist notion of art’s ‘universal’ accessibility to the ‘common reader’” (*Canadian Postmodern* 132). Contrarily, this sense of a limited readership is a major issue in the accusation of “vulvalogocentrism” (Tostevin) that Lola Lemire Tostevin and Frank Davey argue limit Marlatt’s writing to a nondeconstructive reversal of the valorized term that continues binary opposition. In *Taken*, Marlatt’s contamination of the categories of race, gender, and sexual orientation with each other and with the differences that explode each category deconstructs the oppositional sedimentation of categorical being, insists on mobile and shifting becomings that depend on contextual location, and refuses to prioritize the categories of *woman* or *lesbian* as *the* singular term of difference. In this way, she forms shifting and particularly located alliances with various readers without relying on the concept of a universal reader or categorical identity. Such a strategy that invokes the non-identical within categories and the elliptical return of difference as re-sonance and “re-

The second section of the three-part novel identifies the main structural fold between binary oppositions as the closet of hybridity that contaminates the distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality. The violence of the closet's secret enclosure unfolds in an intertextual chain that alludes to and reverses the writing/reading violence that constructs Baron de Charlus's homoeroticism as a spectacle in Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*. Poignantly, the central section of *Taken* focuses on Charles and the women who are "taken," captive, occupied, silenced, reduced to the coded ciphers of a binary and oppositional war. The erotic and vocal eruption of the 'out' lesbian narrator is excluded. Her silence both affirms the topic of lesbian love as *the* secret and denies the reading of homoeroticism as violence. In Marlatt's analysis, the violent reading/writing spectacle is the occupation of individuals through the construction of the active, heroic, public figure of heterosexual masculinity and the acted-upon, domestic female and maternal ground who is the object of desire/conquest. Reading into Proust's construction of a 'spectacular' closet, Sedgwick argues, "The novel seems both to prohibit and to extort from its readers such a violence of interpretive uncovering against the narrator, the violence of rendering his closet, in turn, as spectacle" (223). In Marlatt's narrative reversal, the violent spectacle revealed through the closet is oppositional war.

In the central section of *Taken*, Marlatt reads/writes into the violent textual conventions of Hegelian binary opposition. The violence that forecloses a connecting

sounding" (Irigaray, *This Sex* 214) within the same of categorical location simultaneously signifies multi-logical becomings in relation to multi-signifying contexts. This, I argue, is far more postmodern than the teleological assertion of a categorical position or reader.

space between opposing binaries is hidden by naturalized narratives of coherent heterosexuality, gender, and nation that erase heterogeneous differences. An epistemology of warring opposition develops in the separation of figure and ground, male and female, public and private, heterosexual and homosexual. Rather than enacting a reading/writing violence of spectacular homoerotic excess, the author's and the reader's attention to Charles's homosocial attraction humanizes him, provides lines of subjective escape from the violence of excessive and repeated inscription within the divisive heterosexual plot. The violence of categorical inscription makes Charles an object, a prisoner of an extended epistemological war. Transgression across binary categories (which as Sedgwick argues is always already marked although never singularly contained by the secret of the homoerotic closet) makes him human, rather than a two-dimensional cardboard character, and inscribes his resistance to oppressive regulation.

Charles transgresses the binary separation of heterosexual/homosexual, male/female, figure/ground, subject/object: "He felt a surge of affection for Matson, for the men in the carriage, some of whom he knew had been through hell" (66). Similarly, he resists his painful inscription in the Hegelian violence of the conquering narratives of gender and nation in which the figure's authority, distinction, and privilege are established in a narrative ingestion or occupation of (back)ground to support the specular gaze of the subject: "Hard to imagine it enemy territory. He'd always had a sense of physical lightness, clarity even, in the free space of those mountains" (65). The private narrative of a non-Hegelian intersubjectivity, love, and domesticity are a part of Charles which does not fit the gendered narrative that excludes masculinity from domestic

ground. Even in the midst of the prohibition against reading Charles's transgressions into categorically female space in the masculinist war narrative of men who make history and women who, as Frank Davey writes, are doubly occupied as objects of patriarchal and national conquest ("Women's Lives" 18), Esme's presence puts Charles's categorical public position as a speaking, desiring subject under erasure. Suzanne writes, he "could almost smell her Chanel . . . 'the way you smile and speak.' . . . He wavered into a void where drivenness, the sharp focus of will simply left" (68-69). Esme's figuration in the public sphere of desire and Charles's dispersal into the domestic background of the desired ("drivenness . . . disappeared") also exposes the violent occupation and objectification of a heterogeneous subject through the masculinist narrative of a social speaking subject who is the desiring effect of linguistic organization that displaces his own and his mother's (incoherent) body. The supplementary ghost of Esme's perfume (the *pharmakon*) reveals her presence as a speaking subject who desires and crosses the gaping divide of physical separation and constructed absence in the intersemiotic sense of smell as a signifier. In his longing for connection with the domestic milieu from which he has been separated, he reads the fictional violence of inscription: "Sometimes when he thought back to Penang, everything that had occurred in the interim felt like some adventure flick that he had accidentally stepped into, caught up in a role already written for him" (62). The secret of the war ciphers that Charles must protect do not simply hide the closet of homoeroticism or homosociality but also the binary reduction of difference into a reflection of the same. As Luce Irigaray argues, a between-men "hom(m)o-sexuality" enables the return of the self-same in a masculinist (*This Sex* 171), Hegelian

opposition, which marks the erasure of difference that contains the binary opposition of heterosexual/homosexual, figure/ground, body/language, subject/object, and public/private within the values of the dominant term. Yet Charles's subjective movement between binary categories marks his difference from the inscription of masculinist subjects as enemy aliens³ who rigidly enforce the heteropatriarchal plot in Marlatt's previous works.

The war of oppositional separation is a fictional construction, rather than an originary essence, that requires excessive and repeated inscription since secrets continually escape categorical containment regardless of prohibitive constructions. The unsanctioned secret, inscribed by the binary prohibitions that construct it as the outside, enables a transformative surplus excess that cannot be recuperated and silenced for the national good and production of power. Charles and Matson move to "a Dutch hotel where they were surrounded by a language they couldn't speak" (61) in order to increase the regulatory borders of prohibition against accidental discovery of war secrets, but the persistence of heterogeneous semiotic systems cuts through their willed intention to contain themselves in the self-same of (in)difference. The intersubjective desire for

³Frank Davey insists that the inescapable lack and desire that Lacan argues is the condition of all human beings is restricted to the oppressive condition of men in *Ana Historic*. Contrarily, he argues, women in Marlatt's novel have access to primal being, a pre-Oedipal unity (*Post-National Arguments* 208). Yet, in terms of a psychoanalytic argument, the lack of the objectifying sign to inscribe the subject's essence is the inscription of the semiotic *chora* on the symbolic that bridges bodily drives and the always displaced and inadequate thetic. This is not pre-Oedipal unity but a semiotics that moves between sign systems. The oppressive condition of men that Davey refers to in Marlatt's previous writing comes from a return of the self-same in a "hom(m)o-sexuality" (Irigaray, *This Sex* 171) that breaks the link with the maternal and disorganized body.

otherness both within symbolic linguistic systems and between systems of semiotic meaning transgresses categorical containment: the Vander-Haeghes want to practice their English with Charles and Matson, and “Conversation was for the most part unintelligible to him but gestures were not” (62). As Deleuze and Guattari argue, the concept of a secret is like a half-opened box that oozes pressure on society in a double movement of concealment and revelation of what is inside and outside the system (*Thousand Plateaus* 287-88). The secret folds between systems, between the inside and the outside of regulation, and pushes toward otherness and change.

Following the identification of the hierarchically privileged binary term, the inversion of binary hierarchy is the essential second move of a deconstructive writing. To enable political change, however, a third movement is required that undercuts the inversion and reveals its catachrestic (non)foundation. Marlatt criticizes the manner in which Lola Lemire Tostevin dismisses inversion in her accusation of Marlatt’s “vulvalogocentrism” that focuses on feminine difference, in *How Hug a Stone*, and on an unrecorded alternative female history and implied narrative of improvement in Annie’s becoming lesbian, in *Ana Historic*. Tostevin, Marlatt argues, ignores “the long history of the absence of women’s subjectivity . . . the negation & inferiorizing of the female body, particularly the erasure of lesbian desire” (*Readings from the Labyrinth* 128). Yet, in *Taken*, Marlatt seriously addresses Tostevin’s criticism of a reliance on *the* difference of gender (and sexuality) that ““ten[ds] to recontain or recuperate the radical epistemological potential of feminist thought inside the walls of the master’s house”” (de Lauretis, qtd. in Tostevin 38). In *Taken*, the oppositional war narrative of inverting power relations

complicitly feeds the shifting but continually dominant relations of oppressor/oppressed. The “imperious,” colonizing figure of Mrs. G. realizes this when her seemingly successful ordering of the guard, “*like somebody’s kabun,*” to pick the bananas later turns on her when he takes the object of bananas for himself as subject, and she is beaten “*with his rifle. . . . you are prisoners now who have merely offered him his due*” (63). In *Taken*, Marlatt destabilizes binary opposition through lines of flight beyond categorical differences of gender and sexuality that inscribe figure and ground. Yet she also resists a completely free-floating neutrality of Deleuzian “*n sexes*” or *n* positions that ignore the historical specificity of different political struggles. As in the example of the woman above, East/West and racial relations retain a specificity that is not amalgamated into a lesbian erotics of binary deconstruction, yet the lesbian ghost of the closet connects with the rhizomatic project of decolonization. The persistent twentieth-century echoes of the lesbian erotic and transformative energy of the secret in the closet continues to haunt the space between the binaries without categorical reterritorialization⁴ or becoming irrelevant or invisible.

By writing in the contaminated and hybrid space between category and its erasure in impossibility, Marlatt places gender and sexuality in a ghostly return of difference. The

⁴In relation to *Steveston*, Diana M.A. Relke argues that Marlatt’s intersubjective connection with a multitude of those who are defined as ‘other’ to the dominant heteropatriarchal humanist ego is enabled by her own empathy as a woman oppressed by sexism. However, her empathy with dispossessed Japanese people, fish, and boats, for example, reterritorializes the differences through the issue of sexism. Marlatt makes the empathetic connection through an anti-sexist rhetoric that stands in for anti-oppression on various specific and different fronts.

unrecuperable excess of heterogeneous struggle for decolonization expands molecularly in a rhizomatic energy of coalitional support that grows within a struggle against the regulatory regimes of power that are already molecularly split in categorical position. Imagining herself speaking to a colonial woman captured in a Japanese prisoner of war camp, Suzanne writes:

you found yourself housed with strangers, women you wouldn't ordinarily speak to. . . . you knew that everything had changed, and irreversibly . . . you wading into the filth, stench so strong it would knock you back, but having to get the drains unplugged and knowing the others who were fanning fires or picking rice from the grit and broken glass were counting on you — and then when that filth began to move, the small wry satisfaction you felt: taken, yes, but not completely.

(67)

Literally, the text comments on women from different races, classes, and cultures occupied in different tasks for survival. However, it also leaps abstractly to a nonfoundational coalition politics that is not an idyllic unity. The nonfoundational politics comes through the persistent struggle for change that is accountable to the racism and classism that fracture categorical sameness (“*women you wouldn't ordinarily speak to*”). Current attempts to construct a nonfoundational feminist politics must continue to raise issues of difference and exclusion. The importance of such struggle for nonexclusionary specificity prompted Sky Lee to respond to the anti-racism that silenced criticism of the homophobia spoken during the conference *Telling It: Women and Language across Cultures*. Lee, quoting Joanne Arnett, suggests we need to “risk

ourselves” and have “a conference called YELLING IT: WOMEN AND ANGER ACROSS CULTURES” (*Telling It* 184). Only by refocusing on all the different material concerns (“*get the drains unplugged*,” “*fanning fires or picking rice*”) of women struggling for vitality during the heterogeneous assaults of colonizing, anti-feminist wars can a nonfoundational politics emerge that must admit complicity in order to question it and begin to move it out of the system. Unlike the aporia of complicity and resistance that parodically nods at its own conservatism in Linda Hutcheon’s postmodernism,⁵ Marlatt’s acknowledgement of complicity inscribes a political radicalism that pushes beyond the balancing opposition to escape systemic enclosure (“*taken, yes, but not completely*”).

Yet the intertextual construction of new positions by displacing various sign systems and discourses into different contexts does risk complicity with the original racist and homophobic texts and a misappropriative violation of the racial and sexual other of colonial desire. In parts one and three of *Taken*, the lesbian narrator continually intrudes/wells into the narrative and floods the discussion of her hybrid ancestors, especially her mother, with an erotic, lesbian context. By appropriating a racist discourse of the nonreproductive, homosexual sickness of hybridity without fidelity to original intent, Marlatt inscribes the potential for nonrepresentational change that depends on the undecidable and hybrid space between original and copy that changes both polarities by contaminating the one with the other. In *Colonial Desire*, Robert J.C. Young argues that,

⁵See my critique of Hutcheon’s postmodern deconstruction in the chapter “Canadian and Québécoise Affirmative Deconstruction.”

because the concern of hybridity is its nonidentical offspring, theories of hybridity are always heterosexual (25). However, in practice, the absence of progeny in homosexual relations actually encouraged closeted relationships between races: “. . . its advantage was that it remained silent, covert and unmarked” (26). Further, the alignment between homosexuality and hybridity is marked by contamination: “. . . hybridity and homosexuality did coincide to become identified with each other, namely as forms of degeneration” (26) and nonreproductive sterility. Marlatt deploys these symbolic inscriptions to raise the possibility of a maternal homoeroticism that escapes the reproduction of patriarchal definitions of maternity that depend on the separation between self and other that enables colonization.

Still, a lesbian desire that continually haunts the spaces between binaries, especially the space of interracial hybridity, could simply enact a reterritorialization of the colonized other through a reclamation in postmodern guise of what, Young argues, typifies an essentially British construction of desire for otherness that is “no doubt complicit with colonialism itself” (3). He cautions that “Today’s self-proclaimed mobile and multiple identities may be a marker not of contemporary social fluidity and dispossession but of a new stability, self-assurance and quietism. Fixity of identity is only sought in situations of instability and disruption, of conflict and change” (4). Sarah Harasym has pointedly accused Marlatt of reproducing colonial desire. Harasym argues that the use of the Indo-European root word “*dhei*” in *Touch to My Tongue* enacts a “movement where the specificity of discourse is dissolved into sexual excess.” The erasure of national, cultural, and linguistic difference in such jouissant use of another

language marks the racial other by appropriating the body and culture of the Third World as a figuration for a sexuality that will enable First World discourse. Further, Harasym notes, Marlatt's use of Hindi in *How Hug a Stone* equates "the notion of insanity . . . with the foreign country India" (120). While Harasym's theory is faultless, it does not really apply to Marlatt's investigation of binary opposition and the deployment of language, race, and nation in either of those two texts. In "Lo(o)sing the Floodgates," I have previously argued that in *How Hug a Stone* and *Touch to My Tongue* Marlatt investigates the violence of specularization that creates the oppositional and hierarchical splits of First World/Third World, male/female, origin/construction, history/myth, present/past, subject/object, and body/language (73-74). In *Taken*, she makes such investigation more overt. Suzanne continually questions imperial complicity and recognizes that Esme's nostalgia for the mothering body of Ayah is the construction of a colonial financial transaction. While Marlatt continues to deploy hybridity, she locates the racist connotations of the sexual, embodied other of the theoretical, intellectual colonizer in the Hegelian binary frame that she continually strives to undo.

However, Harasym's criticism is not to be taken lightly within Marlatt's oeuvre, since her earlier works can be read as a deployment of the 'other' in order to authorize 'self.' Terry Goldie argues that Marlatt enacts an appropriating indigenisation in *Ana Historic*, by aligning Ana and Annie with the land and the body through the silence of the aboriginal woman who presides over the birth of the first white male in Burrard Inlet. Through such indigenisation, Goldie suggests, Marlatt makes space among the "Lost Boys" in "Never-Never Land" for "a new Wendy," who has previously been excluded

from the exploration of *coureurs de bois* and relegated to domestic, maternal enclosure. Thus she makes “a new version of the old woman’s way, making a new land of a new land” (17). However, Wendy Waring argues, Goldie does not take his reading into the following deconstructive space that forms a critique of imperialism.⁶ Further, Banting argues, in the act of translation without fidelity to the source text, Marlatt’s “language of nominalization, categorization, hierarchization, domination, colonization, subordination, and control” reveals its unspoken contestation of racial imperialism (“Translation A to Z” 125). “Translation,” Banting insists, “is essential in order to open up and convert a statement such as “‘the first white child born on Burrard Inlet’ to something like ‘a woman’s body in its intimacy, giving birth’ ([*Ana Historic*] 131) and to underscore that neither is the first *white* child the first child” (“Translation A to Z” 126).

While *Ana Historic* shows Marlatt’s complicated investigation of the intersection of feminism and colonialism, her earlier work is not as easily qualified. In *Vancouver Poems*, she engages anti-racist and anti-classist struggle by including a heterogenous mixture of people, myths, and histories that reflect the diverse, historic locations of Vancouver culture, but she simultaneously displaces (misappropriates) native cultures.

⁶Wendy Waring agrees with Terry Goldie that the silence of the aboriginal woman, Ruth, in the birthing room institutes “the politics of racial imperialism” and an indigenisation that is “overlaid with the desired re-birth of Annie’s mother . . . [a] birthing into a world beyond patriarchy.” However, she disagrees with his conclusion by reading beyond the potential claim of indigenisation and into Marlatt’s refusal of the “discourse of imperialism.” In the concluding scene, in which Annie and Zoe are stamping envelopes, keeping “‘tiny images of the Queen . . . under [her] thumb,’” Waring argues that Marlatt moves beyond imperialism and enacts “feminist theory in the postcolonial mode” (459-60).

Her references to Kwagiulth culture enact a “‘literary land claim’” (Fee 29n4) that feeds an immigrant desire “to write myself into the history of a city i wanted to belong in and felt i didn’t quite” (“Entering In” 222).⁷ Marlatt’s elision of the Kwagiulth,⁸ whose historic land claims lie north and west of Vancouver, with such Coastal Salish peoples as the Squamish, whose historic land claims include the Vancouver area, reduces differences into a singular, exotic ‘other.’⁹ The issue of (mis)appropriation is raised by Marlatt’s distortion of historical, geographical, and racial difference that gains cultural power through various critical responses to *Vancouver Poems* and *Steveston*,¹⁰ as well as in her

⁷I present and argue the details of this analysis in my MA Thesis, “Lo(o)sing the Floodgates.” While “Entering In” was only published in *Canadian Literature* at the time that I completed my thesis, I continue to cite the original publication here because the “literary land claim” stated in her past desire to write herself into the *history* of the city has been edited out of the revised version in *Readings from the Labyrinths*, which simply reads “write my way into a city i wanted to belong in and felt i didn’t, quite” (23).

⁸ The name *Kwagiulth*, as a closer approximation to the sound of the word, has taken currency over *Kwakiutl*, the name formerly used in Western anthropological studies.

⁹Contrarily, one could argue that, if Marlatt is refusing the concept of faithfulness to a singular originary moment in the translation between geographical, mythic, linguistic, and temporal bodies, the Kwagiulth legends are not displaced, since they are among the multinational partial presences in contemporary Vancouver. However, to do this, the differences within the multinational Native spaces need to be brought to the fore to enable the “postcolonial delight” that Pamela Banting reads into the multilingual space that says “‘yes’ to these her several mothers” in “In the Month of Hungry Ghosts” (191-92).

¹⁰Marlatt’s elision of differences into a singular ‘other’ in *Vancouver Poems* gains cultural authority in the otherwise excellent readings of Doug Barbour’s argument that the Kwagiulth ceremonies and totems in *Vancouver Poems* enact “a mythic engagement with and understanding of the natural world in the place Vancouver now stands” (“Daphne Marlatt” 224), Brenda Carr’s unqualified acceptance of Marlatt’s use of Kwagiulth cosmology in *Steveston* to describe the mouth of the Fraser River (“Daphne Marlatt’s Salmon Texts,” 136; “Re-casting the Steveston Net” 87), and John Bentley Mays’s prefatory remark for his lengthy description of Kwagiulth ceremonies that “It is not possible to give here a full account of these Salish people . . .” (23). The Kwagiulth

selective use and elision of distinct groups of West Coast First Nations people in her project to create a female erotics in a local language. This reterritorialization of racial difference into a between-women erotics also occurs in the figuration of Japanese in *Steveston* and Mayans in *Zócalo* (Quigley 40-69).

In *Taken*, the inscription of lesbian desire within what Young sees as the degenerative and homoerotic configuration of hybridity haunts the main narrative of Esme's marriage to Charles, predicts (pre-speaks) her "Death insane in a foreign country" (12), and continues to raise issues of colonial complicity. The traces of this narrative are marked by the hybrid signs of her body: her "hair . . . would not keep a perm" (6). They are marked by the signs of Esme's mother's and daughter's hybrid bodies as well:

Aylene, born in India, a doctor's daughter. Scots-Irish, she always insisted, good blood. When she died . . . they remarked how tiny she looked in the coffin, skin like a venerable Chinese lady, no white face powder to cover it. This echoes the story Esme told of holding new-born Suzanne, fascinated with her black hair, thick black lashes . . . doesn't she look like a Chinese baby, Mother? Utter drivel, Aylene had snapped. (107)

The echoes between lesbian Suzanne and the hybrid bodies of her female genealogy hold no substantial truth. The pre-spoken prediction of hybrid insanity changes into a re-sounding, a resonance that elliptically returns with difference between the fictions of corporeal and textual bodies, official and unofficial inscriptions, subjects and objects of

are not Salish: they are Wakashan.

the colonial and phallogentric inscription of desire. A shift in the use-value of hybrid signs is marked by a between-women desire, by the emotional energy through which Suzanne writes Esme's improper, female subject. But the use-value also questions the 'purity' of whiteness on which the oppositional binary is based. Through the affirmative inscription of unknown possibilities in the erotic gaps that open within unstable, molecular substance, Victorian Aylene's use-value becomes the impropriety of 'white' values that censure and inscribe the binary separations that enable colonization. Aylene's repeated denials of impropriety enact a Foucauldian logic, in which previously unknown constructions come into presence through denial (Foucault 49).¹¹ The unauthorized narrative of "these colonial stories that perpetuate a making-strange" (*Taken* 107) marks the secret of scandalous and denied attraction to the colonized other as the uncontrollable insistence of racial difference and homosexuality into colonized territory. This attraction fabricates without fidelity to originary intent (which includes colonial intent as well as the 'original' corporeal drives of the *chora* that Kristeva argues change the symbolic). New positions emerge through rhizomatic connection and derailment that weaves among the

¹¹Aylene, Esme's mother and Suzanne's Victorian grandmother, most rigorously denies hybridity. Thus, she connects historically with the era of Foucault's study. A similar dialectical construction of knowledge can be abstracted from Foucault's history of sexuality and applied to racial hybridity as well. In relation to the construction of the previously unknown through denial or prohibition, Foucault writes,

We have not only witnessed a visible explosion of unorthodox sexualities; but — and this is the important point — a deployment quite different from the law, even if it is locally dependent on procedures of prohibition, has ensured, through a network of interconnecting mechanisms, the proliferation of specific pleasures and the multiplication of disparate sexualities. (49)

A similar production of disparate notions of race and nation evolves from the mechanisms of colonial domestic and public interactions.

intertextual and intersemiotic sign systems that form the “surfaces of sense” (Brossard). European, Chinese, Indian, heterosexual female, homosexual, fictional, rumour-laden, and denied textual and corporeal bodies interrupt and derail each other. As an apparition that *seems* to emerge from nowhere, a ghostly lesbian erotics appears in the inversion of hierarchical binaries that deregulates authority and enables the categorical lines of previous denials and prohibitions to cross, mix, and contaminate each other. But the between-women or lesbian erotics remains a ghost: a virtual trace that does not have enough identity to reterritorialize specific issues of colonization that continue to develop in many different directions.

This ghostly lesbian body without organs of the transgressive slipping signification of hybridity matters, forms a foundation for the lesbian ghost language of desire that is not a product of a split between chaotic bodily drives and the organized thetic of language.¹² On the surface of signs, both bodily depth and any proper connection to signification disappear. “Matter,” Deleuze and Guattari argue, “in nomad science, is never prepared and therefore homogenized matter, but is essentially laden with singularities (which constitute a form of content)” (*Thousand Plateaus* 369). The lesbian ghost language of desire in *Taken* is not the production of lack that occurs in the displacement of a disorganized body through the organization of language. The ghostly return of difference in a homoeroticism that haunts theories of interracial and interlingual

¹²The refusal of the split between body and language resists Sarah Harasym’s criticism of Marlatt’s enactment of lesbian desire through the colonizing equation of the other with the body in *Touch to My Tongue* and *How Hug a Stone*.

hybridity emerges through the heterogeneous body of language. Marlatt writes, “language is larger than us and carries us along with it. . . . the horizon line of language extends always beyond each individual speaker/writer” or “narrative line” (*Readings from the Labyrinth* 53-54). Lesbian desire is a becoming present that ghosts its way through a series of temporary and insubstantial becomings that continuously shift across the multiple and heterogenous bodies of hybrid signification.

Marlatt’s translation without fidelity across systems inscribes the emergence of Esme’s between-women desire in the contaminated crossing of racist and heteropatriarchal interracial constructions. This contaminated crossing is important, since it resists the colonizing contexts of original inscription. Esme’s statement, “I like Chinese men, . . . they don’t have all that disgusting body hair” (6), twists gendered attraction as it is written on her female hybrid body. Young writes,

. . . [T]he gendering of racial difference means that the sex of the races to whom the Westerner is attracted becomes indifferent. . . . [T]he fundamental white-black/yellow relation that [Joseph Arthur comte de Gobineau] describes is one of male to female. . . . [T]hen the white male becomes instinctively attracted to both sexes; . . . As so often in the colonial arena, civilization begins to merge with an inter-racial homo-eroticism. (109)

In *Taken*, Esme’s Western desire for Chinese men temporarily becomes a lesbian desire for another woman, a feminized body without the phallic inscription of sexuality (“all that disgusting body hair”), an echo of a hybrid lesbian desire that opens as an uncolonized space in the gap between the masculine focus of Young and the racism of

Gobineau.

The literary inscription of contemporary lesbian desire in the relations of self-otherself (Penelope Englebrecht) or the shifting relations of subject and object (Marilyn Farwell) echo in Suzanne's inscription of her first-person lesbian self and Esme, as a maternal otherself.¹³ Yet, in *Taken*, the re-sonance of self and other move beyond binary relations and proliferate into a virtual realm beyond any of the 'original' languages/texts/subjects/bodies of racist and phallic inscription. The heterogeneity not only of the symbolic in one language but also of transgression across languages and philosophies pushes beyond the fidelity of translation from a body into language. Suzanne writes, "Only later did i find out what people thought of them in Penang — 'chi chi,' they said when my father proposed to her, mixed blood" (6). The Confucian *chi*, as Ambrose Y.C. King argues, is the self as "a dynamic entity . . . capable of modifying and creating its role relations with others" (61). Between a lesbian theory of subject-object relations and Confucian philosophy, the hybrid lesbian 'self self' ("chi chi") of Suzanne's maternal ancestry enacts a ghostly becoming present that does not rely on arboreal truth or the misplaced heterogeneity of any body (corporeal or linguistic). Instead, the lesbian intersubject appears through the relational creation of heterogeneity between bodies of inscription. Translation without fidelity to the organizing cultural differences of signification within national languages rhizomatically links with sexual relations without fidelity to the patrilinear organization of desire. This link makes possible the connection

¹³In the rhizomatic drift of an intersubjectivity formed in relations across differences, Lori also forms another self in the lesbian relation of desire and subjectivity.

between a productive, illicit, and hybrid affair in Suzanne's maternal ancestry and a lesbian trace of self-self ('chi chi') in the dissent of her descent that will not faithfully reproduce the racist, heterosexist, and masculinist theories of hybridity, sexuality, desire, bodies, and language.

In *Taken*, the colonizing British desire for the other raises issues that begin as systemic complicity but cannot be contained as continuing fidelity to the original nation or race and, ultimately, contaminate the colonial intersubject in a movement of hybridity that inscribes change. The potential of such contamination to eradicate the self/other distinction appears in the difference between Esme and her daughter, Suzanne. Esme's colonial hybridity repeats colonial distinction with gendered difference, while Suzanne's postcolonial hybridity acknowledges multiple selves in a "para-centrality" of the subject (Spivak, *Post-Colonial Critic* 147).

Esme's desire for the exotic — her desire for the fluidity, colour, and noise of Malaysia — inscribes both complicity with and resistance to colonial specularization that echoes the ambivalence of "In the Month of Hungry Ghosts,"¹⁴ Marlatt's much earlier

¹⁴Michèle Gunderson argues that "In the Month of Hungry Ghosts" "struggles to reinvent" a language and place for Marlatt in Penang without the "unacknowledged repression" and "unacknowledged distancing" of colonial and patriarchal complicity (78) that imprison her more thoroughly as an adult in relation to servants than as a child in relation to her *amah*. While this is true, colonial complicity persists in the language to establish the basis for the struggle. Marlatt's critical analysis of the hierarchies and separations established by the colonial categories of race, class, and gender is simultaneously intercut with her attraction to and terror of the physical excess of Malaysia. The attraction of this exotic excess is what pulls her to connect with the people in Penang and work toward a different way of anti-racist, anti-classist, anti-sexist negotiation that mirrors Esme's struggle in *Taken*. Ann Munton notes the repetition of the word "alien" that reflects the colonial displacement of "In a Month of Hungry Ghosts"

description of her own return to Penang. Esme, Suzanne writes,

wanted orchids, armloads of orchids. She wanted colour and tropical explosions of smell, running water over hot pavement, the rake of Kabun's twig broom in the grass, always, everywhere, the melodic hubbub of voices in unknown languages, bullock hooves, bicycle tires, a tiny orchestra of frogs deafening the night. Not war, not this incessant talk of airfields and tanks and battalions fighting their way through jungle. (9)

Esme's desire for the other focuses on the material excess and multiplicity of colonial life, which is not a monological imperialism of warring opposition, of figure crossing, conquering, and defeating the "jungle" of ground. The "melodic hubbub of voices in unknown languages" resonates with Kristeva's theory of the rhythm and sound of the *chora*, establishing a pulsional movement of body into language that can never be represented in the phallogocentric symbolic. Once the body's disorganized drives are

(214). But, more than a word, displacement persists in various linguistic acts of othering: "In a Month of Hungry Ghosts" opens with the terrifying haunting of the narrator's dreams and consciousness by poisonous snakes (*Ghost Works* 76). The market is filled with colourful fish and a plethora of sensuously described fruit (*Ghost Works* 83). The poem "crossing by" refers to the conflicted hybridity of imperial tennis and "gardens of night-blooming / kengwah / orchids" (*Ghost Works* 86). A description of proliferating varieties of palm exposes the sweetness and terror at once offered by the (primitive? ape-like?) man "sliding down the tree so fast, who with one blow of his machete" opens the coconut (*Ghost Works* 92). The streets reveal the exotic press of the throng, the colour of saris, and "shining flesh, oil gleaming off black hair." People "sleep on the sidewalks, piss in the gutters, women nurse their babies on the roadside. . . . the press in the streets is almost amniotic, it contains & carries everyone" (*Ghost Works* 93). The otherness of the heterogenous mixture of Malaysian people conveys a colonial reduction of cultural difference to a sensuous and threatening physicality in a pre-symbolic "amniotic" space of indistinguishability.

represented in the symbolic as separate objects, they become displaced by the organization seen as necessary to make sense. Esme's resistance to the exclusion of the maternal, female body from the ability to make sense connects with a need for physical presence, an embodied language of the other. Yet her desire for the other is also marked by the colonial gaze that focuses on smell and physical excess. This gaze marks the persistence of a binary opposition between the civilized colonizer and the natural colonized, between a pre-Oedipal, primitive body and an Oedipal, civilized language. Upholding the gaze of the subject/object split, Esme perceives the languages as "unknown," rather than specifically unknown to her.

Suzanne's focus on multilingual sites of difference that contaminate English purity resonate with Esme's colonial, feminist desire in postcolonial difference. Suzanne speaks of "Urgent talk, calls we didn't understand" (10), focusing knowledge and subjectivity in a ghostly space of intersubjectivity that is much larger than the self. The mother's feminist desire to connect with an otherness that inscribes the colonial discourse of the uncivilized body provides a link for Suzanne's postcolonial discourse of cultural hybridity between multiple and partial bodies and languages. As Young argues, ". . . 'culture' was not opposed to 'nature,' but was rather the term that came between the nature/civilization opposition" (42). Suzanne moves away from the opposition of self/other, figure/ground, colonizer/colonized, language/body and toward a third space of cultural hybridity. The connection between oppositional separations reinscribes Esme's need for an embodied female desiring presence but displaces it to the destabilized ground where there is no singular subject in language. This rhizomatic space without a lacking

subject of original intent¹⁵ enables flight from the racist and phallogentric inscriptions of otherness and objectification that reterritorialize feminine and nonWestern subjects as objects.

The no-longer-other speaks. Marlatt inscribes an oral hybridity into Suzanne's polylingualism that moves without systematicity between the territorial, local, and domestic languages of Anglo-Indian, Anglo-British, Anglo-Canadian, French, Malay, Hokkein, Tamil, and Thai.¹⁶ The polylinguistic and corporeal "sens apparent" (Brossard) touch, cross, and contaminate each other to inscribe a movement between multiple Easts and Wests that challenges the division between French-feminist theories of *l'écriture féminine* and postcolonial theories of feminist imperialism. In the hybrid space between, Marlatt reveals the distance from either origin:

Gula melaka. Crumbly dark brown palm sugar that isn't sweet until the sweetness hits your mouth after the muskiness. Put that together with down-to-earth oats, the comfortable taste of English porridge, bland as congee, and never

¹⁵In "Revolution in Poetic Language," Kristeva writes, ". . . the phallus is not given in the utterance but instead refers outside itself to a precondition that makes enunciation possible. For there to be enunciation, the *ego* must be posited in the signified, but it must do so as a function of the *subject* lacking the signifier . . ." (*Kristeva Reader* 101). The *ego* is posited as the signified subject that cannot be spoken or make sense without the separation that establishes it as a separate, organized object that, at the same time, contradicts the bodily sense of disorganized drives. The absence of the subject in psychoanalysis is the essence of a subject lacking in articulation.

¹⁶Marlatt names British and Canadian "English, Malay, Hokkien, Tamil, Thai" among the languages spoken in her home in Penang (*Readings from the Labyrinth* 19). She has changed the reference to "Cantonese" in the original publication of "Entering In" to "Hokkien."

spiced as congee might be with onion or meat. Porridge . . . linked with my father and gula melaka. Impossibly . . . every word an opening, a small internal explosion. Amah in the kitchen insisting with her throaty voice and radiant smile, a smile that outshone doubt or refutation, that this, this bowl held out to me is milk. It's the way she says it, *san/tan*, an affectionate rhyme, a challenge to take what I know isn't milk, at least not Nestle's powdered milk that comes in cans, but something so much tastier, coconut shavings wrung out with water, the water turned milky, fragrant, sweet.

Gula melaka and santan appeared in the dining room only on Sundays, with sago pudding that concluded curry tiffin. Otherwise, except for an occasional supper of mah mee, it was English fare, or as close as one could get with tinned this and powdered that. (26)

The word "congee" opens lines of flight that are both territorial and deterritorial. In the collision between the multiple senses of "congee," a territorial and national rein is placed on the *jouissance* of the signifier that is authorized by imperialist Western theory to escape its territorial (Eastern) context and inscribe a universalizing "white ink" of between-women erotics in language. As a culturally located *entrée*, the word "congee" marks both the territorial orality of the mouth and the territorial, national location of language. Yet, for the English-speaking reader, the main course marking the territorial food of the mouth in the embodiment of language seeps into sense in a process of "transcreation," which deterritorializes in the process of making contextual meaning without the substantive location of translation. Transcreation appears in an intersemiotic

or interlingual movement of sense.¹⁷ As Shazia Rahman argues, it also positions the speaker between “the margin and the centre” (97) and denies the territorial dominance of either culture. The territorial meaning of the word *congee* resists the Western signification that etymologically ties the signifier to the Middle English, Old French, and Latinate roots of *congee*/*congé* as an authorized departure: “Authoritative or formal leave or licence to depart, granted by one in authority: passport” and a “Ceremonious dismissal and leave-taking” (*OED*). Yet the meaning of departure does not entirely disappear in the flight of translation without representational fidelity between “milk,” “oats,” “porridge,” “san/tan,” “gula melaka,” and “congee.”

The deterritorializing and reterritorializing law of British rule, the attempted imposition of order/sense by the colonizer, is contaminated by a territorial orality of food, embodied language, and polylingualism that cannot be reterritorialized. The corporeality of Amah’s “throaty voice” and her “affectionate” and nourishing mothering talk cross boundaries of sense where both the “coconut . . . water” and the “bowl” become “milk” (“ . . . this bowl held out to me is milk”). The naming of British foods that are already deterritorialized, crossed through, and erased in the colonial distance from the mother country produces a return of *différance* in the simultaneous preservation and loss of

¹⁷The term *transcreation* seems to have several origins. Pamela Banting notes that Fred Wah’s use of this term to describe the nonreferential movement of the body into language in his *Pictograms from the Interior of B.C.* (1975) comes from Samuel Taylor Coleridge (*Body, Inc.* 19n1). Shazia Rahman discusses the meaning of the term as the movement between languages that Yasmin Ladha (who studied with Wah at University of Calgary) develops in her essay “Circum the Gesture” (96-97). The term also links with the “transformances” that Marlatt and Brossard enact on each other’s work in *Mauve/Mauve: a reading* and *Character/Jeu de lettres*.

sensory identity (“tinned,” “powdered”). The “milk” under erasure returns the gaze both to and against Hélène Cixous’s metonymic embodiment of *écriture féminine* as a milky writing with “white ink” that inserts a catachrestic, feminine body into Derrida’s figuration of “la scène blanche” that reveals the effect of origin in writing without any external, original foundation. In *Taken*, the connections with origin are the linguistic and corporeal sources that are both already hybridized. The territorial orality of the mouth is not deterritorialized into language and reterritorialized by linguistic sense that subjugates the heterogeneous body to a system of knowledge and meaning that displaces the subject into a speakable object. Linguistic sense continues to be deterritorialized by the resemblance and displacement of the territorial taste of foods, sounds of language, and nurture of mothers in the deterritorialized transgressions and connections of a linguistic polyglot.

In Marlatt’s focus on the hybrid spaces within and between writing and bodies that become the origin of intersubjectivity, gender as *the* marker of binary difference comes under erasure. The “white ink” of Cixous’s *écriture féminine* is displaced by the multiple intersemiotic and interlingual sites of hybrid intersubjectivity. The deterritorialized relation between bodies, languages, and objects outside of language produces a “congee,” forms a departure, and takes leave as a substance/substantive. The fluid relation of uncontainable hybrid meaning becomes an affective, emotional movement between territorial and deterritorialized signs that produces the effect of disorganized drives without relying on bodily essence. This creates an energy of desiring production among the differences of partial languages and bodies that cannot

reterritorialize sense. Marlatt's flight of passage is a transgression without fidelity to European, maternal "milk" or East Asian "san/tan" that releases Suzanne from the heteropatriarchal and Eurocentric colonization of "mater, like her mother . . . solid, stamped with public approval" (112). The transgressions across linguistic and embodied systems are not lesbian specific. However, they are haunted with echoes of the closet as the hybrid space between binary separations that enables between-women desiring transgressions of Euro-phallogocentric theory. Banting argues that Marlatt's inclusion of her *amah* in *Touch to My Tongue* shatters the narrow patriarchal and colonial definition of the family and multiplies the genealogy of women beyond "the phallic mother and daughter" (*Body, Inc.* 192). Marlatt continues to inscribe alternative relations between women in *Taken*, but the essence of a maternal claim against colonization is brought to a crisis by colonial occupation: "Who had that first ayah been? with what child of her own or child lost? And what had she covertly passed to Esme in her milk, what tastes, what feelings?" (113). In *Taken*, the abduction of the woman of colour who stands in for the colonial mother is not overlooked, nor is her potential to inscribe in the colonial daughter a hatred for imperialist power. The maternal bodies of *Taken* are not simply marked by nature, gender, or linguistic coding but by an intersection of multiple differences that touch and modify each other.

In *Taken*, Marlatt's investigation of whiteness in a lesbian space between the binaries enacts bell hooks's call for "non-black allies" in an anti-racist struggle that does not reproduce the "[c]ommodification of blackness" within the "imperial gaze — the look that seeks to dominate, subjugate, and colonize" (7). Hooks insists that "non-black"

writers must “interrogate their perspective” and cites Christian Walker’s argument from “The Miscegenated Gaze” that ““If white artists, committed to the creation of a non-racist, non-sexist and non-hierarchical society, are ever to fully understand and embrace their own self-identity and their own miscegenated gaze, they will have to embrace and celebrate the concept of non-white subjectivity”” (hooks 7). The question Young raises about the complicity between colonization and the desire for the sexual and corporeal other cannot be completely resolved in hooks’s equation of the gaze with a vigilant observation of “who . . . we identify with, whose image . . . we love” (6). But Suzanne’s questioning of colonial desire supports an anti-imperialist, nonspecularizing love for her *amah*. She asks whether her father’s hybridity comes from “The romance of the East speaking . . . And what was romance but colonial sentimentality? The soft glove on the ruling hand?” (textual ellipsis; 27). Further, Suzanne does not withhold the power of the colonized subject to interpellate the colonizer. In alliance with Homi Bhabha’s theory that colonization also displaces and changes the colonizer, Suzanne wonders, “Was this the inkling of a different way of being — a challenge, perhaps, to all he’d been raised with?” (27). Marlatt’s resistance to the separation of colonized and colonizer enacts the kind of nonhierarchical hybridity that bell hooks argues enables political resistance to the imperial commodification of the racial other and the transgressive “outlaw rebel vision” that “shift[s] paradigms” beyond “dualist thinking” (4). Marlatt’s ghostly inscription of lesbian desire in the rhizomatic crossing between binaries and categories in the third space of hybridity aligns with hooks’s anti-racist politics. A lesbian desire continues to echo throughout *Taken* but never fully contains the specific differences within and

between the categories of nation, race, gender, body, and language.

Chapter 9. Holey Bodies and Languages

Representational writing strives to achieve a ‘real’ that is beyond (or higher than) the displacing distortions of language. However, the transgressive relations between corporeal, linguistic, and abstract (thinking) bodies in a “desiring writing” level the ground for a movement within and between the permeable corporeal and linguistic bodies that create surfaces of affective energy. As Kristeva argues in “The True-Real,” nonrepresentational writing creates the “vréal”: a plausible real (*Kristeva Reader* 227). Yet Kristeva’s theory of surface effects only pertains to writing since the *chora* invokes a bodily reality that displaces and is displaced by language. In *Volatile Bodies*, Elizabeth Grosz counters this psychoanalytic separation. She writes:

Instead of . . . an endogenously originating psychical representation striving for an external, absent, or lost object (the fantasmatic and ultimately impossible object of desire), orality can be understood in terms of what it does: creating linkages with other surfaces, other planes, other objects or assemblages. . . . These interactions and linkages . . . are not merely superficial, for they generate, they produce, all the effects of a psychical interior, an underlying depth, individuality, or consciousness, much as the Möbius strip creates both an inside and an outside.

(116)

By levelling the psychical depth of the subject and memory to horizontal planes and surfaces that refuse binary hierarchy, Marlatt writes memory into the rhizomatic intersections of surface becomings. A mobile intersubjectivity between hybrid bodies and hybrid languages creates tentative presences and mutable nominalizations in a quantum

relation of parts that enables them to shift shape in desiring connection and interaction in multiple contexts. The movement toward a postcolonial sense of the world, for example, begins to develop in the contradictions Esme experiences between issues of gender and national difference. A movement toward a nonfoundational politics, in which molecular lines of political specificity meet with the contradictions that open holes in the substantial, molecular elements of location, begins to emerge in Suzanne's evocation and erasure of a green, utopian island that is impossible. These contradictions between categorical locations do not solidify as positions but ghost a becoming present that remains connected to specific contexts as the writing drifts between the differences. This levelled field of intersubjectivity contrasts with the vertical alignment of identity that reaches for absent originary pasts and essential truths. Both sides of the contradiction are 'truths' of the "petits récits." The hybrid spaces of bodies and languages do not capitalize on gender or lesbianism as *the* difference of constitutive construction, but the ghost of the lesbian closet that forms desiring connections continues to haunt interlingual and intersemiotic translation without repression.¹

¹Kathleen M. Scheel's "Freud and Frankenstein: The Monstered Language of *Ana Historic*" undertakes a psychoanalytic analysis of Annie as a resisting reader to Freud's "paradigm of castration anxiety" (95), revealing the way women are gendered in lack through the specularization and value-coding of a masculinist language of mastery that "hide[s] their agenda to control through repression and erasure" (100). The hysteria that reveals "striking similarities between [Freud's hysterical patient] Anna O. and Annie . . . and the obvious pun of Anna/*Ana Historic* on Anna Hysteric" (101-02) is horrifically doubled both by Ina's electroshock therapy that results from her diagnosis as a hysteric and the echo of that with "a further and more horrifying conflation of fictional texts, the vision of the monster with electrical wires applied to his head as Victor Frankenstein struggles to jolt him to life" in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (101). Through the proliferation of such horrific doubling, Annie reveals women's silenced "dis-ease" with

Marlatt writes the intrusions of Suzanne's memory away from a vertical alignment of desire with absent origins, where one is "taken with illuminant desire" (96). Such full presence can only evoke nostalgia for the purity of an undisplaced origin one can "never live up to" (*Taken* 96). Nostalgia inscribes a complicity of lesbian and female subjects with what bell hooks sees as a colonial occupation of the other through a primitive longing for "a sense of plenty, bounty, a field of dreams" (25). Instead, Marlatt writes a rhizomatic drift between partial bodies and languages, in which the utopian dream of plenty is not crossed through by its unknowable impossibility but by the impossibility of creating a unified whole out of parts. Nostalgia displaces "the longing for

(rather than the "disease" of) a hysteria that results from their phallogocentric construction as unspeaking objects of desire rather than as speaking subjects. Criticizing Lola Lemire Tostevin's accusation of "vulvalogocentrism," Scheel argues that "... Zoe mirrors Annie back to herself" just as Birdie mirrors Ana (107) so that they can confront "the internalized loathing of the self as other" (106). Through this alternative mirror, Annie can become a speaking subject (108) and "... author[] herself by languaging herself into desire" (108). The lesbian relationships that reject Freud's masculinity complex "finalize the disruption of Freudian psychosexual theory" (107). Rather than writing Annie as a hero, Scheel argues that Marlatt deploys the difference within the same of the doubles to subvert lack and show "that colonization of the land — or women — is not necessarily a desirable end" (95). The repetition of "Ina's Ouija board prediction, 'you will die insane in a foreign country' . . ." (qtd. in Scheel 100), with Aylene's Ouija board reading of Esme's "Death insane in a foreign country" in *Taken* (12, 103) reveals a generational movement away from Empire and the distance Marlatt's novels have travelled into a postcolonial hybrid desiring production that includes (but is not limited to) female and lesbian interrelations. Ina is Annie's post-WWII mother, while Aylene is Suzanne's Victorian grandmother. While Esme is inscribed as both colonized and colonizer and is culturally contaminated by her relation with her servants, Suzanne's relinquishment of the gaze moves her further from the centre of Empire (or any system). Suzanne's crossing between the bodies of language, nourishment, nation, race, gender, sexuality, motherhood, and daughterhood in *la dérive* of writing with a postcolonial "white ink" cannot be singularly reduced to gendered metaphors. Through Suzanne, Marlatt writes against lack inscribed in many forms.

the place the body opens to" (7) into essentially unspeakable, corporeal and maternal origins. Nostalgic desire that lacks the heterogeneous signified subject is complicit with the heteropatriarchal occupation of language and refers only to the already occupied binary construction of presence/absence, male/female, heterosexual/homosexual. Suzanne writes, "the Straits Settlements . . . was still a colony on the fringe of the mother country's skirts. . . . Ghosts are those who occupy a place, but not in the flesh, those who are left with only the memory-trace of it on their tongues" (7). At times, the figuration of ghosts in *Taken* inscribes the insubstantial drift between partial corporeal, linguistic, and abstract bodies that 'ghost' the beginning of new sense. Yet the word *ghost* links through the surfaces of sound with the root-word *ghos-ti* that inscribes a historical etymology of opposition between guest/host and stranger/enemy. Through this improper connection of sound with etymological and historical meaning, ghosts also inscribe a contradictory site where bodies are haunted by past inscriptions. Such ghostly occupation colonizes desire by reterritorializing the drift between material and abstract aspects of languages and bodies in terms of a heterosexual Oedipal system ("Straits Settlements"). In psychoanalytic terms, desire is chained to the separation of the maternal and corporeal body from the individuated speaking subject and that subject's consequent nostalgic longing for the heterogeneous body that is displaced by the organization of specular language.

Lianne Moyes counters Lola Lemire Tostevin's critique of Marlatt's nostalgic desire in *How Hug a Stone* by insisting that Marlatt "takes 'nostalgia' out of the realm of the sentimental and reframes it in terms of the uncanny by disrupting the polarity of

absence and presence,² the familiar and the strange, desire and that which desire rejects — pain, confusion, nightmare” (215). Pamela Banting also circumvents the reduction of desire to nostalgia, in her intersemiotic reading of “musing with mothertongue,” by insisting that Marlatt focuses on the “connections between the materiality of language and the physicality of the body, neither of which — language or body — Marlatt privileges as the origin of the other” (Banting, *Body, Inc.* 149). In *Taken*, Marlatt questions the complicit imperialism of a nostalgia that creates desire for the “soft voice and endlessly forgiving arms” of Ayah, Esme’s absent, colonial mother-substitute from the past who was, Suzanne comments, “hired to be forgiving” (39-40). Rather than invest in the multifaceted patriarchal colonization of the subject in nostalgic desire, Marlatt concentrates on the surfaces that create the effect of depth. On the surface of signs without essential depth, Marlatt is able to decode the occupation, by “bear[ing] witness to her [mother and herself] at the scene of her loss” (Carr 314) and provoke new alignments of desire.

Marlatt strategically uses and refuses a pre-Oedipal desire in *Taken*. Suzanne’s initial nostalgic desire for utopian plenitude as a complete connection with pre-Oedipal fullness without difference or separation aligns a lesbian space outside the phallic symbolic with Kristeva’s figuration of the semiotic *chora*. Such strategic figuration allows Marlatt to refuse the Oedipal division of the daughter from the mother, yet the production of desire remains caught in the phallic divide that initiates the separation. In

²Lianne Moyes also notes that the residue which haunts the space between the poles of binary opposition is “neither a lost presence for which the speaker longs nor a body outside discourse but a *mark* or *sign* left by something no longer present, the trace of ‘corpus’ in ‘corpse’” (210).

the third deconstructive move that destabilizes binary inversion, such alignment of lesbian desire with the pre-Oedipal *chora* is immediately undercut. Prompted by Lori's materialism, Suzanne criticizes her own attraction to utopian plenitude as "A luxury we can no longer afford" (20). Plenitude simply inverts the phallogocentric inscription of lack by fictionalizing an unsignifiable 'real' outside phallogocentrism that complicitly reproduces the quietude of an unspeakable lesbian difference: "Enclosed here — as if becalmed . . . Nothing we do has any consequence. The fatal idea of islands cut off from the main" (textual ellipsis; 16). In Kristeva's theory, the *chora* of biological bodily drives that inscribe female difference exude pressure on the symbolic that folds between thethetic and the body. But the inchoate 'real' of heterogeneous bodily drives can never be spoken because articulation depends on a displacing objectification that organizes and excludes.

If a lesbian embodiment of erotic energy is not only outside what is speakable but also outside the biological reproduction of maternity, it becomes not only "the love that dare not" but also the love that cannot "speak its name." Shirley Neuman writes, in *Touch to My Tongue* Marlatt defines "mothertongue" as "anterior" to signification in the "presyntactic field" and apart from Oedipal regulation in the "postlexical field." A socially signifying space of difference matters. Neuman writes,

. . . [T]he writer attempts to elude the *lex*, the law-of-the-father in *lexicon*. Where Kristeva posits an originary 'language' in the physical relationship of child and mother, the 'postlexical' writer departs from her to posit origin in the *woman* rather than in either the law-of-the-father or the maternal *chora*. (401)

By placing a “homosexual-maternal” in “a whirl of words, a complete absence of meaning and seeing” and a sublimation that “is both eroticizing without residue and a disappearance of eroticism as it returns to its source” (*Desire in Language* 239, 240), Kristeva figures a lesbian drive in a pre-symbolic space between mother and child that is outside social relations. Social and erotic relations, she argues, must come through a double inscription of the mother as “Phallic” that enables the figuration of “someone in that filter. . . . [I]f, on the contrary, there were no one on this threshold, if the mother were not, that is, if she were not phallic, then every speaker would be lead to conceive of its Being in relation to some void, a nothingness asymmetrically opposed to this Being, a permanent threat against, first, its mastery, and ultimately, its stability” (*Desire in Language* 238). Without the phallic displacement that makes a social subject, Kristeva suggests, love between female bodies (mother and daughter, or between women) reflects the “inherent psychosis of the speaking Being” (*Desire in Language* 238). Further, only through the reproduction of the “homosexual facet of motherhood” or in “[t]hose afflicted or affected by psychosis” is the figuration of the mother “a paradise lost but seemingly close at hand” (*Desire in Language* 230, 240). Kristeva’s theory of a maternal *chora* inscribes an essential homophobia at the heart of relations between women, since the love between female bodies (lesbianism) that refuses the phallic inscription of the mother is necessarily psychotic and without desire.

To develop a lesbian intersubject in relation to Kristeva’s theory, the phallic side of the maternal-homosexual cannot be dismissed since all we are left with is the other of an a-social, nonpolitical, maternal body. The problem with Kristeva’s oppositional

formulation is, as hooks argues, that such nostalgic construction of the other relies on a primitivism that reproduces an imperialistic enclosure of the other in the nonspeaking, noncultural body of nature (25). In *Taken*, Suzanne's self-critical attraction to the utopian green-world of Sappho's island/eye-land/I-land that upholds binary opposition between heterosexual/homosexual, male/female, subject/object, and language/body becomes a strategically essential space that enables the inversion of the hierarchical binary. But the utopian green world increasingly becomes a space that inscribes the imprisoning containment of the imperial state. Women in the prisoner-of-war camp are cut off from the world, "*lost somewhere in a mapless world*," and (productively) distract themselves from the painful inscription that erases their bodies by inventing "*another extravagant recipe to dream over*" (88). Marlatt writes the pre-symbolic world of the maternal *chora* into the animal body of women as breeders, the "immaterial," insignificant ground of the Desert Storm war in the Gulf that "drifts toward a herd of breeding sea cows soon to be forgotten, immaterial finally in the human struggle for dominance" (86). The utopian island of otherness in *Taken* that relies on the oppositional difference between the *chora* and thethetic ultimately provides the ground and support for colonial and patriarchal occupation in the symbolic. The ultimately heterosexual focus of the maternal "desire to bear a child of the father" (Kristeva, *Desire in Language* 238) displaces lesbian desire. The speakable phallic referent in the symbolic "struggle for dominance" displaces the lesbian body into either an unspeakable, nonphallic, maternal nature or a speaking, phallic, maternal desire. Consequently, a lesbian politics based on a *choric* island separated from the main or a symbolic fold between female *choric* depth and phallic

displacement both become inadequate.

Rather than relinquishing the speaking and desiring differences between Lori, Suzanne, and her mother, Esme, to the phallic marking of the heterogenous depth of bodily drives, Marlatt moves away from a theory of the *chora* to investigate the differences that proliferate on the heterogeneous “surfaces of sense” (Brossard). Desire as the collision between surfaces that creates something new, rather than the distance between the depth of the body and the surface of language, enables the productive energy of a nonfoundational politics. As Lynette Hunter argues, the Lacanian notion of linguistic inadequacy supports the sense of an “ordered, rational world” (131). The inadequacy of representation creates the desire to make language closer to its original, unspeakable order. This phallic desire that lacks the heterogeneous fusion of its original subject poses a major problem for a nonfoundational politics that cannot presume any original statement of unity. Further, a language of desiring inadequacy can dismiss the particular issues of various struggles against social regulation (such as the struggle of lesbians against maternal coding) as an essential consequence of a phallic *méconnaissance* to which all speaking individuals are subjected (as distorted, commodified objects). There can be no desiring anti-Oedipal politics that is the meeting of located, speaking positions if desire is the unspeakable gap between heterogenous origin (intent) and its always inadequate Oedipal representation.³ Further, the figuration of a utopic lesbian space that

³Frank Davey’s reliance on a pre-Oedipal space to explain *Ana Historic* ultimately argues this point in reverse:

What may appear superficially to be a political novel, a novel that challenges from a feminist perspective how society is structured, what discourses and roles it

keeps its binary distance from phallic displacement can only encourage an elision of lesbian sameness that relegates differences between lesbians to the effect of the patriarchal, phallic markings of nation, race, class, and culture that can then be dismissed as irrelevant to an uncontaminated libidinal unity. Clearly, this is not a productive space for a nonfoundational lesbian politics.

A pre-Oedipal figuration of nonphallic lesbian difference would support a categorical sense of lesbian identity and erase the emphasis Marlatt places on the important differences in the narratives of race, nation, history, gender, and class that ultimately separate Suzanne and Lori.⁴ In *Taken*, these are not separate, patriarchal narratives but parts of the heterogeneous surfaces through which the specificity of

allows to women, is in the end not a political novel at all. For the pre-Oedipal space it both dreams of and realizes as the ‘home’ of woman is yet another utopian plenitude, eternal, natural, before (or at least aside from) the symbolic realm of language and thus apart from the social and political clashes and negotiations that the symbolic enables. (*Post-National Arguments* 208)

It is precisely in Marlatt’s use of a semiotic translation between bodies and languages, between various languages and narratives, and in the *dérive* of a language that cannot remain unitary that Marlatt moves beyond an originary pre-Oedipal space in order to write a desiring politics. “Home,” body, language, origin are all always already multiple and hybrid in Marlatt’s writing.

⁴This insistence on the “lesbian” complicity with and perpetuation of the “old” narratives of nation, race, and gender distinguishes the radically deconstructive and postmodern project of *Taken* from Marlatt’s earlier incomplete but more thorough dismissal of the “old country” in her revisionary fictions of her-story in *Ana Historic* and *How Hug a Stone*. As Eleonara Rao argues, Ana “bears the attributes of a liminal rite of passage, a threshold phase that follows the separation from the old (known) world in England and yet precedes her becoming part of the new one” (307). Most critical analyses of Marlatt’s lesbian and feminist experiments with historiography emphasize her revisionary focus within the silent gaps of History that reveal the exclusion of women’s desiring production.

mother-daughter and lesbian relations make desiring alliances. Marlatt insists that the category of lesbian be placed under erasure in order to enable systemic change.

Something else is needed to describe “where we are, inside so many levels of connection . . . [r]ooms afloat on a sea of electronic impulses” (86). This place between systems is figured variously among contemporary feminist writers who write from the surfaces rather than relying on the depths of sense. Donna Haraway sees it in the “cyborg” body. Nicole Brossard calls it the “cortex” (corps/texte). Rather than an essential difference inscribed by bodily drives that “channel” energy, difference is read on the surfaces by shifting the angle of vision. Barbara Godard’s figuration of lesbian difference in the “parallax” of vision depends on a reading of unstable elements rather than on the motility of depth (“Producing Visibility”). As Fritjof Capra writes, “Particle physicists are used to switching from one channel to the other in their calculations . . . and talk about the ‘direct channel’ and the ‘cross channel’” (286). Since each element can represent “altogether six different processes” (Capra 286n), the emphasis shifts from describing objects to perceiving the “events” and “reactions” (Capra 276). The “channel” moves out of sublation and onto the surface of quantum relation. Marlatt’s figuration of the fluid space of synaptic connection between rooms alludes to, but puts under erasure, previous feminist images of the sea/mère/mer or the Sapphic island of bliss. By making the connections between images more fluidly atomic, and less molecularly substantial, Marlatt inscribes lesbian desire as a relation between differences of corporeal, historical, linguistic, geographical, racial, temporal, literary, abstract, and sexual bodies of women.

The place of desire in *Taken* lies between the inside and the outside, in the

interconnection between the “rooms” of the larger war-narratives (the wars of World War II and Desert Storm, as well as the oppositional wars of gender, sexuality, nation, and race). The molecular substance of these “rooms” inscribes Lori’s position, while the subatomic drift and mutation of one into the other inscribes Suzanne’s connection to her mother in an enormous outside of the type that Deleuze and Guattari argue deregulates the oppositional foundation. In *Taken*, the location of desire is neither in the utopian space of sameness that Kristeva insists is without the split of difference that creates desire nor in the opposition between body and language figured in the novel through the oppositional war-narrative that Kristeva argues constructs desire. Kristeva suggests that the symbolic protects the body by subverting the death drive into attacks on “the place of the signifier” where the thetic was not fully able to sublate the drives (“Revolution,” *Kristeva Reader* 103). However, in *Taken*, desire springs up between sameness and difference. The “grey” space between “rooms” may not be as attractive, spectacular, and seductive as the utopian, Sapphic island (figured as completely outside the imperial, patriarchal, phallogocentric colonization of the subject), but it enables political intersession and change. Suzanne says,

Grey, not a word that holds colour even by that name, especially through the greenest eyelet we could find, as if there might be no membrane between indoors and out, as if windows open, even in winter, for the nearest cedar dripping rain and the dawn to step through, might waft us beyond the constraints of ordinary waking. (34)

Plenitude (“dripping rain”), as a complete utopian connection (“windows open”) between

the inside and the outside, body and language, past and present, self and other (Suzanne in relation to Esme and Lori), is a seductive concept that draws Suzanne's desire to know and make present her (m)other. But the connection requires a crossing between differences, a movement to the threshold that delimits difference, and a translation that reveals its own territorial markers, rather than an assimilative incorporation of body and symbolic knowledge into the same: "as if"⁵ they ever could assimilate.

Yet, in the "grey" space between similarity and difference, the grammatical signification of conditional impossibility ("as if") meets the impossibility of containment within any system. As a material condition of language, the condition of the sign can change. The "direct channel" of linear, representational inscription can shift to the "cross channel" of rhizomatic production. In S-matrix theory, Capra writes, "The interconnections of such a network cannot be determined with certainty, but are associated with probabilities. Each reaction occurs with some probability, which depends on the available energy and on the characteristics of the reaction, and these probabilities are given by the various elements of the S matrix" (277-78). By analogy, if bodies were said to be marked positive and languages marked negative, these values and their directional momentum shift when viewed through another channel in S-matrix theory. In Marlatt's novel, the high energy collision of desiring production becomes a probability

⁵Frank Davey notes that the repetition of "as if" in *Ana Historic* displaces patriarchy and "betrays Annie's monologism. . . . This 'as if' operates as the sign of transformation and reduction through which Annie converts various perceptions and memories into component certainties of a new interpretation" (*Post-National Arguments* 202). In *Taken*, "as if" displaces any monological idea of a utopian feminist space outside the regulatory regimes of power, language, and culture.

theory of interconnection on the threshold between the known and the unknown, bodies and languages, in the liminal zones where similarities and differences touch and become something other than any of the originals. The grey zone of Suzanne's borderline mornings between conscious and unconscious being and nonbeing is the nonpositional, noncategorical threshold of a ghostly coming into partial presence.

Such interconnection emerges in the catachrestic erasure that develops in contradiction between multiple hybrid systems. In the narrative colonization of women's bodies and female subjects that equates the feminine with the object of masculinist desire, Esme admires Dorothy's resistant ability to take the stance of a desiring subject who writes and contests the law-of-the-father (the law of social organization) within the domestic world. In her campaign for public hygiene, Dorothy becomes an agent of action on the issue of infant mortality, which changes the personal and domestic into the political and public. Yet Dorothy's resistance to the patriarchal colonization of the female subject simultaneously exposes her imperial colonizing gaze that dismisses the subject of knowledge of a different cultural system. Esme thinks, "As for the urban Chinese, they had been eating, chatting, sleeping, and doing business in their streets for more generations than the British, with all their notions of hygiene, could count. But she didn't say this, didn't know how to say these things that felt like glimpses rather than positions she could take in conversation" (31). Esme cannot occupy a 'position' in the shifting relations that place her between the incommensurable categories of gender and race that cross valuation in the already oppositional positions of colonized and colonizer. Because Esme's sense of her shifting social relations is not inscribed as knowledge in her early

twentieth-century context, she is unable to articulate the fictional violence that erases differences within social categories or the developing hybridity of the colonizer. However, the meeting and crossing of gender and race create touchpoints, enable a glimpse of something else, and ghost a conditionally based, unspeakable presence of postcolonial feminism in the process of becoming.

Interconnections also develop through tangential similarities. Memory, for Suzanne, is a desiring and rhizomatic leap that crosses the sites of corporeality and language with little regard for linear origin. Banting argues that such intersemiotic translation is only possible because “the body must be always already textual [or] . . . transformation/translation could not take place” (*Body, Inc.* 182). This already textual site enables a flash point where differences can touch but are not reduced to assimilative identity. The “bidirectional” translation between bodies and texts, Banting argues, changes both originals: “The body, organized (incorporated) by language, but always also retaining is ‘fleshiness,’ never wholly absorbed, mastered, expressed, or mimed by language, mothers its own tongue.” The body “translates” and “signs back” (*Body, Inc.* 152). In *Taken*, languages and bodies ghost each other, supplement each other, inscribe a difference that can only be seen in the movement of contamination, in the way smoke as a supplement to elemental air makes the drift visible: “Who do i burn incense for? Each descent into memory (poling through murky waters) stirs up the dead. Stirs their words to the surface where they blow like ashes suddenly wind-struck” (29). Both language and

bodies are presences:⁶ “the cat . . . insisting his presence” while “. . . words keep us branching here rather than there where the dreams are” (21). Yet a purely elemental, physical presence is unspeakable, just as a disembodied objectivity of language is impossible. The desiring drift of Suzanne’s language reveals an insubstantial, invisible, nonspecular body memory in the linguistic chain that leaps between territorial (corporeality) and deterritorialized (language) presences.

Suzanne’s cat inscribes a bodily presence that is not reduced to a maternal “herd of breeding sea cows” (86) but speaks a physical type of social language. As a figure of the nonlinguistic body, the cat (category of corporeality?) is part of a chain of similarities and differences that drift into language, connect with lesbian desire in the mother-daughter and between-women relations of language, yet do not assimilate lesbian desiring production into categorical unity. The cat’s physicality is incommensurable with human language and parallels Suzanne’s investigation of “what gets passed along in body tissue” (25). Although wordless⁷ and marked by the rhythm of “writhing,” rather than writing, the cat’s body still speaks through reciprocal *différance* and differences drawn out in response and relation: “Stroke — a word that fails to convey the rhythm fingers make in

⁶Diana M.A. Relke’s ecofeminist analysis of *Steveston* supports the idea of a semiotics that is developed between bodies and language without relying on pre-Oedipal psychoanalysis. She writes, “. . . Marlatt steered her postmodernism around the trap of linguistic determinism implicit in the notion that there is no nature except in the one we construct” (47).

⁷Beverley Curran reads the “porous narrative” of *Taken* as Marlatt’s “recognition of a permeable body.” Curran writes, Marlatt “lets bodies drift beyond human relationships, and language, letting the reader listen through the body . . . to what haunts us . . . wordless” (57).

fur, responding to his torso writhing under my hand. He purrs, tail lashes, almost giving in, almost thinking to escape, still wiry with the large and barely perceptible waking of the world outdoors — he has only just come in, paws still fragrant with earth” (21). The cat’s body figures a speaking nature that inscribes and is inscribed by the difference of social interrelations. It speaks in its own physical language.

Because a body is already in social relation, is already textual as Banting says, a threshold for intersemiotic translation develops. The mouth, which is both corporeal and linguistic, opens holes in the categories of body and language and allows them to permeate each other. Rather than seeing this relation as a psychoanalytic production of desire in the *méconnaissance* of language that objectifies and reduces the heterogeneity of an originary body, Marlatt develops a meeting between surfaces of difference that intensify each other. Language marks and increases the heterogeneous eroticism of bodies and vice versa. In the drift between the holey bodies and languages of the lesbian lovers, “the ‘o’ my lips make around the smooth berry of your nipple” (7) speaks the trans-(e)lation produced in the connection between simultaneously territorial and deterritorial linguistic material (the letter *o*) as it touches and nourishes the simultaneously territorial and deterritorial body (“berry of your nipple”) and vice versa. In the “smooth” space that Deleuze and Guattari argue characterizes a nomadic transgression that eradicates the separating borders of systemic organization, the territorial material of language (*o*) is also a deterritorializing abstraction of the territorial orality of the mouth, while the territorial materials of bodies and foods are also deterritorializing abstractions into metaphor. In the holey space of difference within heterogenous corporeal and linguistic bodies that enables

flight from each categorical location, desire flashes in the energy of connection that produces, not a fantasy, but a real, affective charge.

In the drift between corporeality and language, the methodology for the production of desire is political. The lesbian lovers read gendered strife into desire based on the absence of the signified in the voice of a woman whose calls of “RICH-ard! RICH-ard!” (8) and “GIN-ger! GIN!-ger” enable them to see she is calling a cat who is “not a cat, it’s something she can’t remember” (46). What she cannot remember — an inferred nostalgic longing, desire premised on the separation of the maternal body from language, lost plenitude, the separation of the word from the body — connects with Suzanne’s investigation of desiring relations with her mother. Marlatt translates Suzanne’s desire onto the heterogeneous material surfaces of language that reveal the desiring drift toward bodies and vice versa. In the visual and aural embodiment of the surfaces of language without fidelity to an originary signification, the material chains of typography in the capitalization of “RICH” and “GIN” echo and re-sound the productive intertextual heterogeneity of language. Contrary to Kristeva’s theory that the transference of the death drive into language enables destruction of previous symbolizations, Marlatt deploys atomic elements within the intertexts of language to produce new connections. In an intoxicated feminine flight (“GIN-ger”) between “RICH” and “GIN,” sense intertextually spins off into the feminist her-story of the becoming-lesbian Annie who is married to Richard in Marlatt’s *Ana Historic* and spirals through the word “RICH” into Adrienne Rich’s theory that places desire between women on a lesbian continuum. In the analogy of quantum physics, the atomic particles of language speed up, spin away from the

original nuclei (subject, context) they orbit, and leap into orbit with another. Between the original nucleus of the lost, abjected mother and the secondary nucleus of lesbian desiring production, sense abstractly produces (as a virtual element that is not tied to “RICH” or “GIN”) a third element. A nonpsychotic, lesbian mother-daughter relation appears as a connection between the call for the cat and Marianne Hirsch’s theory of the Demeter-Persephone⁸ plot that twists the search for the abducted daughter into the search for the abducted mother who abandons the daughter’s desire. Suzanne says to Lori, “You don’t find this easy, your own associations with that world shot through with old betrayals. Yet you can’t abandon the mother you feel abandoned you” (47). The quantum, intertextual flights on the surfaces of language open holes in the binary separations of heterosexual/homosexual, male/female, and language/body and reveal a heterogeneity and nonsolidity that enable liminal touchpoints. Changing the Oedipal plot of essential separation to the Demeter-Persephone plot of political abduction changes the methodology that produces desire.

Janice Williamson argues that the Demeter-Persephone mother-daughter narrative in *Touch to My Tongue* operates within the parameters of Irigaray’s discussion of desire between women and between women and language as a relation of distance and proximity, difference and sameness, and autonomy and fusion. Difference opens holes in

⁸In *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*, Marianne Hirsch describes the Demeter-Persephone plot, an alternative to the Oedipal plot, as characterized by a spiralling return of “continued *opposition*, *interruption*, and *contradiction*” (35) that duplicates Hades’s continual abduction of Persephone and Demeter’s continual reunification with her. Hirsch argues that in much of nineteenth- and twentieth-century women’s writing, the mother of the heroine is absent, abducted.

categorical positions, Williamson argues, and operates with a *jouissance* of nearness that destroys subject/object relations (182-84). In *Taken*, Marlatt's spiralling return between categories temporarily connects the differences of language and corporeality on the points of similar and heterogeneous attraction and movement. This productive connection consequently shifts the location of desire from the inadequacy of linguistic objectification to the creation of new, vital sense in the moving drift between female bodies and language. Further, Marlatt's challenge to categorical enclosure also moves beyond the psychoanalytic focus on a gendered relation of body to language and opens holes in the categorical unity of women or lesbians in order to enable desiring connection between sameness and difference in a nonfoundational coalition politics. The word "cat" drifts into connection with the "Tomcat" war machine of Desert Storm (37) that ideologically separates Lori and Suzanne. Suzanne also fears that a reference to the "cat" in a letter to Lori would make a lesbian territorial claim on the "tangled web that leaves us oddly positioned" (22, 52) in the continually deregulated drift of desire between bodies of language, corporeality, sexuality, history, and mothers. In order for terms such as *lesbian*, *women*, and *feminist* to continue to connect, rather than be torn apart in separation, the holey bodies of contra-diction and difference must be acknowledged.

Marlatt insists in *Taken* that any essential categorical meaning of female corporeality or of lesbian desire itself is undercut by important differences of positional "[r]elations beyond number" (117). Thus her investigations into an embodied memory leap on the rhizomatic flash points of multiple hybrid connections rather than on the systematicity of a gendered body. In *How Hug a Stone*, Banting writes, "The smell of

coal, familiar to the body, is translated intersemiotically with the word ‘coal’ to push back [into] memory, family history and understanding” (*Body, Inc.* 173). In *Taken*, however, the organizing leap between a gendered body and its resonance in a British past is left behind in the crossing of hybrid senses that deconstruct the solidity of nation and race. In *Touch to My Tongue*, Williamson argues that the tongue’s link between the binary senses of body and language draws on the erotic attraction of sound rather than organized meaning and “creates an erotic synaesthesia where the body speaks a language fluid and uncontained” (178-79). In *Taken*, the tongue’s link returns through an excess of rhizomatic difference in Marlatt’s investigation of intersemiotic, interlingual, and intralingual translation.

The taste of words in intersemiotic translation is complicated by the hybridity of interlingual translation in words such as “stengah” and “tiffin” that shift between corporeal, linguistic, national, and geographical bodies that are already heterogeneous in themselves. Translation within and between these bodies creates a ghostly body of multiple presences under erasure and an uncontainable presence that matters not in its substance but in its rhizomatic drift:

Stengah — the word explodes with its flash of associations. Not just the actual taste of whiskey and soda, the blue siphon bottle with its silver handle, not just the Chinese liquor cabinet in the corner of the lounge across from double doors opening onto the terrace, his legs crossed in their white ducks on the low settee, a cigarette from the vacuum-sealed pewter cannister trailing its scent through the room in the wake of office stories and her news of tiffin at the Runnymede with

Dorothy and Molly, or a shopping foray into the cloth bazaar. (9-10)

The interlingual materiality of the word in its cited colonial location bears witness to the colonial ability to occupy and consume otherness with an official singularity. The connection between a Hegelian incorporation of hybridity that eradicates difference and an imperialist accumulation of wealth in the economic context of First World exploitation of Third World economies cannot be denied. The whisky, the elegant soda bottle, and the “Chinese liquor cabinet” bear witness to the accumulation of economic gain through appropriating the other as object. However, excited particles in high-energy quantum interactions leap out of original orbits and derail substantial containment. The high energy of Marlatt’s interactive language excites the linguistic particles into a drift that contaminates the purity of official business and regulation with traces of oral, unofficial history as news, gossip, and unauthorized narratives (“office stories and her news of tiffin”). A domestic community connects the colonizing figure with the ground of intoxicating hybrid nourishment (“tiffin”) in a fluid, feminine, and territorial orality of the mouth that has less invested in the master’s Oedipal colonization of sense.⁹

⁹In *Taken*, Marlatt repeats with fictional embellishments the story she tells in the interview with Janice Williamson, “‘When we change language . . . ,’” about her mother standing up for a Tamil woman who was chastised by a priest for living in sin as evidence of the crossing alliance between anti-racist support against the exploitation of Tamil men and feminist support for the women’s desire to be subjects (*Taken* 54). While I will not cite the whole story as told in the interview with Williamson, Marlatt’s political comments are of interest:

The patriarchal oppression of women and colonialism are two different faces of the same coin, and I can see that in my mother . . . despite the really deep habits of classism she also had. I don’t think the conflicts of thinking women in a colonial situation have been adequately explored. My mother could identify with the women who were her servants. . . . There were also the kinds of conflicts my

The feminine social context of the material sound of the word *tiffin* leaps nonlinearly across etymological origins. As a colloquial Anglo-Indian word, *tiffin* refers to a small or weak drink or a light lunch particularly favoured by “[Mohammedan] ladies.” *Tifer* or *tiffer* from the Old French implies the masquerade of feminine adornment and idle employment. Unknown and possibly onomatopoeic origins in the sound of *tiff* as a ghostly “puff of air or gas” suggest a petty struggle and a short outburst of laughter (*OED*). In the fluid, oral ground of the mouth and the masquerade that reveals what it is not, the deconstructive “Laugh of the Medusa” escapes colonizing containment not only in the intersemiotic crossing between citation and site, languages and bodies, but also in the excessive crossing and connection between intralingual and interlingual languages that leap between the colonizer and the colonized with a little “puff of air” (“ayer” pronounced with an accent). Such oral drift without the authoritative meaning or national structure of proper etymological genealogy creates a ghostly connection between hybrid languages, bodies of women, and her-stories that derail colonizing intent.

An elliptical return of *différance* in the heterogenous productions of the mouth

mother felt being . . . limited in the ways a woman is limited in that society to the domestic realm. The resentments that she felt about having a life that had no meaning, that wasn't valued as productive. . . . In some senses the colonial women were brought in closer touch with the realities of the lives of colonized people than the colonial men were, and I think they felt the conflicts more deeply than the men did. On the other hand, I don't know what our servants really felt about my mother . . . what did they really think underneath that [surface loyalty]? I think she used to worry about that too. She wasn't really committed to that system as a way of life and in fact gave it up quite readily, and I think this was because as a woman she had a political awareness my father didn't have — or maybe I should say a disinterest, a political disinterest in upholding the Empire. . . . (191-92).

connects the separation between what has been seen as an originary body and a displacing and specular language. The intersubject that appears as an event between the surface signs of sense reveals the colonizing fictional construction of an impossible Edenic state of blissful unity that is taken as the original heterogeneity of the lost subject in the war of language/body opposition.¹⁰

. . . ayer limaus — water and lime — was what she usually ordered, “or else,” her light laugh self-deprecating, “I’m afraid I’d be under the table.” The feel of salt on her skin, hair still wet, the chatter of friends, small lamps swinging overhead as the dark blanketed their shoulders suddenly ruffling them with the promise of cool. It was their stage pre-war, “the real Malaya,” as the British would always think. (10)

In this “pre-war” reality from the gaze of Empire, law, paternity, and logos, the ‘real’ of Edenic origin is defined by a colonizing construction that erases its own organizing focus. Hegelian appropriation jettisons the other as anything but an improper reflection of self, and

¹⁰Discussing the lack of fidelity to the idea of translation as a linear movement from source to target language, Susan Holbrook argues that the works of Marlatt and Brossard “take as their field of action the interface between language and women’s desiring bodies, offering sexual, textual interlinings of surfaces . . .” that enable “audacious translation, slipping *her* the tongue” (“Mauve Arrows and the Erotics of Translation” 233, 234). In “Speaking in and of Each Other,” Marlatt addresses the materiality of language that enables a semiotic and erotic escape of language from any systemic control of symbolic meaning:

I’m concerned with how it [the writing] sounds, with how you speak it, and how it can be heard. I think my writing is fairly oral. What most intrigues me is what I think of as the sound body of the work. What kind of sounds bounce off, echo off, call up other sounds. How the rhythms elongate or slow down, or suddenly pick up and run. All of that is as much concern to me as the content or meaning. (29)

the uncolonized body of people disappears in colonizing thought. But, in Suzanne's deregulation of the surfaces of language without reference to original signification (of "ayer" as water), "ayer limaus" connects with the resisting "laugh" and struggle of *tiff* that appears as a nonsubstantive "puff of air" in a nonsystemic and hybrid "tiffin" of language that nourishes (rather than limits) corporeal heterogeneity. The hybridity of languages, bodies, and nations constructs an intersubject that does not rely on a desire that appears as a result of the separation between the original, heterogeneous body and the organized Oedipal object of language and specular gaze. Instead, the erotic gap opens as the quantum space that reveals substances (molecules) are made of particles and can, consequently, form connections in high-energy collisions. Marlatt develops Suzanne's intersubjectivity in the desiring leap between the partial elements of hybrid languages, bodies, and nations that produce an anti-Oedipal (not pre-Oedipal), improper, desiring body without organs. Language is embodied, and bodies are linguistic, which requires, as Suzanne says, a "listening way back in the body. And is this memory? Or fiction?" (25). The undecidable space functions similarly to the affirming negation of the Derridean *pharmakon*, trace, supplement, perfume, or scent. In *Taken*, the subatomic space between elements is the cure for the abduction of the female body from phallic language and desire, as well as the poison (to full presence) that works with the quantum relations of nonoriginary particles to destabilize the truth that is "learned by heart" (Derrida, *Dissemination* 72) in a phallogocentric colonization of language and desire through binary separation.

Any linear or singular connection between memory and historical and corporeal

bodies is disrupted by the paralogical leaps between multiple embodied senses in *Taken*.¹¹ While Banting notes that “The body is a persistent and perpetual translator,” she still refers to “*The* body as its own signifier” through which Marlatt investigates the possibility of speaking without “interpos[ing] our own ego between ourselves and *that* body” (emphasis added). Such reference to a singular body contradicts Banting’s sense of translation that allows Marlatt to “puncture” the logocentrism that “reduces the body to gross matter” (*Body, Inc.* 197). It also contradicts Banting’s discussion of the pictogrammatic, ideogrammatic, and phonetic signifying systems that circulate in fluid translation and combine with the sign systems of smell and touch that inscribe differences within corporeality and make it a possible site for translation between plural signifying systems. This fluidity and multiplicity of sign systems within corporeality, I suggest, implies a multiplicity of bodies, or the hybridity of a body without organs, rather than the reduction of “*the* body” to “its own signifier.” Kelly Oliver argues that the similarities and differences in the bodily functions of ingestion/“incorporation/identification” and elimination/“separation/differentiation” parallel the child’s social relationship with the mother, which enables language development since they “operate according to the same logic on different levels” (180-81). While Oliver’s argument is helpful in pointing out

¹¹Marlatt notes, while writing the novel, that she struggled against the seduction of ‘authenticity’ in relation to memory: “. . . you reconstruct or construct some kind of authenticity of *then*, and it has a sacrosanct quality to it, which is very troubling, because you can’t play with it as you can with fiction. Especially if it involves people in your family. And yet, all memory has a fictional aspect, or develops it over time. I guess I’m trying to find a balance between memoir and something else.” (“From the Moment Outward” 84).

some possible thresholds of contact between the differences of bodies and languages that resist the expulsion of the mother in the linguistic development of the subject, she still relies on an organ organization of the drives that propels bodies into language. A hybrid body without organs meets these points of similarity and difference on a horizontal plane of sign systems that relies on no point of originary foundation. On this horizontal plane without psychoanalytic depth, one meets what Brossard calls *Le sens apparent*. In Marlatt's *Taken*, the elements on the plane of surfaces are in themselves always already hybrid and crossed through with differences that enable connection (without assimilative reduction) between what might be seen as incommensurabilities.

The synaesthetic crossing between corporeal and linguistic senses that Williamson refers to in *Touch to My Tongue* appears in *Taken* along with a crossing between different bodily senses. A visual sign of fluid whiteness for Suzanne, "Making waffles, pouring melted butter into milk in the West Coast kitchen," links to a sign of whiteness in smell — "the smell of new cloth at the Chinese tailor's in Penang" — by paralogically crossing through the intersemiotic connections between the different senses in a body without organs. Following this displacement, a different sense is produced in the return to the visual sign: "Yards of white gathered at her waist, the smell of new cloth. . . . I only have eyes for that creamy flowing, flowering like untouched gardenias round her feet" (43). The territorial sense of memory speaking through bodily senses actually proceeds through the deterritorializing connection and displacement of intersemiotic sign systems: "Memory, a flash, flush of sensation through the body. Unbidden" (43). Without will, without the psychoanalytic displacement of language that commodifies to enable sense,

and without a singular figuration of embodiment, connection between bodily differences begin to make sense, to make narrative for Suzanne, as corporeal interrelations.

The process of Suzanne's intersemiotic translation through the deterritorialized connections of different corporeal sign systems means that translation between corporeal and linguistic senses is not singularly distinguished by displacement. Each sign system is deterritorialized as it crosses the differences of the other and creates touchpoints of connection. Between the different corporeal sign systems and the different linguistic sign systems, Marlatt weaves a continuous process of "*opposition, interruption, and contradiction*." This type of movement, Marianne Hirsch argues, characterizes the Demeter-Persephone narrative of cyclic return (35), rather than the Oedipal pattern of sublation and female abjection. The erotic flashes that connect Suzanne to memories of her mother also enact a Sapphic pattern in which the younger woman pursues the lost or dead older woman (Marks 357). Between these two narrative movements of hybrid bodies and languages, Marlatt writes an anti-Oedipal, lesbian, desiring narrative.

This movement between theoretical narratives "grounds," intextuates, and figures the erotic leaping across different senses of bodies and languages in a lesbian continuum that provides the fictional (horizontal) authority of the symbolic (vertical) in spiralling leaps across times, places, and languages. Yet the narrative grounds do not reterritorialize the multiple sign systems into a colonized whole. The territorial differences of signifying contexts continue to derail the narrative from becoming a lesbian colonization of sense that would displace the heterogenous subject into an Oedipal object. The territorial eruption of contra-diction within the local signifying contexts of the linguistic, historical,

geographical intertexts that haunt the flash of Suzanne's memory include literary and symbolic references to a pre-Oedipal, classical, female mythology, a Christian phallogocentrism, and a postcolonial questioning of the equation of Oedipal power with masculine gender. The classical virginal huntress (Artemis, Diana), a warrior/dyke figure who resists patriarchal conquest/colonization, appears as an insubstantial, symbolic allusion in the "untouched gardenias" of the flowing and gathering white cloth around the mother's waist. She figures a literary inscription of narrative and desire before the story of Oedipus and the presence of lesbian, erotic mother-daughter relations that have been reduced to the Oedipal, virginal absence of desire or the phallic inscription of maternal desire. The "gardenias" also raise the immediately undercut sense of a nostalgic, utopian, pre-Oedipal longing for the gardens of paradise that are outside phallogocentrism.

Intertextually, they resonate with the foreboding walls of containment that Marlatt investigates in *Salvage*: "DANGER SIGN // park your dream, she said / in the mind" (50); "*pairi-daēza* // climbing the walls even / to get over it" (55). The figure of the Christian virginal mother ("untouched") is critically raised through a masquerade of flowing drapery ("Yards of white gathered") that hides her own embodiment as "*the horror of nothing to see*" (Irigaray, *This Sex* 26). This masquerade also displaces her embodiment of the word into the phallogocentric word of God that separates her from her body and constructs her body as meaningless matter, the womb of absent Godly presence. Yet the materiality of a female "desiring language" persists as an embodiment of the

word that leaps between surfaces of partial presence¹² in these heterogeneous inscriptions. In the flow of cloth that escapes (Godly) transparent representation, the text-ile emerges as the woven fabric of languages and bodies that move with the fluidity of mer/mère between islands of molecular substances and reveal deregulating quantum energies. In the leap between abstract and territorial bodies of material language, Marlatt inscribes a transgression, a “territorial rudeness” (43) of infidelity to any of the symbolic texts that opens up the “batik layering” (43), the hybrid background, and the “tempo” (42) of intensive flight in translation between differences.

Susan Knutson argues that, “far from being an essentialist throwback to discredited metaphysics,” Marlatt’s use of past narratives “is in fact an instance of postmodern ‘creative junk gathering’ which focuses on the most important ‘junk’” (41-

¹²Marlatt responds to Kevin McGuirk’s statement that recent theory “tells us there’s no presence in language” with an emphasis on the materiality of sound and the creation of a desiring material linguistic presence that persists even with the physical absence of the lover:

. . . language itself is entirely present in sound. And there’s a way in which the body of the lover and the body of the language inhabit each other. That’s why the poems are not just portraits of a lover, they also portray the language one speaks love with. . . . I wanted the sensuousness of the language to be present, to be foregrounded. The way the language moves is tied in with the movements of desire. Of course, when you’re writing about your lover who isn’t there, there’s this absence that you’re having to negotiate all the time. And so the language is pulling, is working against that absence and creating a presence, where there is in fact only an absence. (“From the Moment Outward” 81)

But “in fact” seems to represent only the bodily absence of the lover that she refers to in *Touch to My Tongue* because, in the mobile “(f) act” and “weight of the (f)actual” in *Ana Historic* (31, 139), the fictions of Ana, Ina, and Annie also make the real. In *Taken*, the dead mother and the absent becoming-ex-lover maintain a ghostly presence in Suzanne’s writing, memory, body, and desire, even though they are not fully physically present in themselves.

42).¹³ However, Knutson's insistence that Marlatt's narrative "is grounded in a symbolic shift which displaces the entire symbolic order: the shift of gender" (42) holds least credibility in relation to *Taken*, where gender and sexuality are always held relative to other kinds of positioning. As I argue about the mythological allusions above, Marlatt's displacement of the symbolic order does depend on the fictions that enable her to construct a lesbian desiring relation between mothers and daughters, and between women, in language (a shift of and in the meaning of gender, as Knutson insists). But her postmodern dismissal of the metaphysical separation of presence and absence is accompanied by a catachrestic awareness that all presences are partial, and these particular issues of gender and sexuality are not universal:

See, for just a second, what it might be like to be that girl, younger than me, hanging around the kedai across the way, spoken to and speaking to the others but all the while staring with that territorial rudeness I know, staring between people and cars at me, outsider in her father's? uncle's? shop, while I, guardian of this gorgeous mother, just as rudely stare back. (43)

Marlatt's lesbian, postcolonial deconstruction emphasizes the importance of Spivak's political interpretation of the Derridean subject under erasure as a "para-centrality that cannot *be*" rather than a "decentred" subject (*Post-Colonial Critic* 146-47). The "para-

¹³Susan Knutson's argument that Marlatt appropriates mythic narratives without fidelity to their metaphysical baggage contradicts Frank Davey's view that Marlatt draws on the older, more 'natural' culture of Artemis, the Old Wood, and Amazons that is displaced by the boys in the Green Wood in *Ana Historic* (*Post-National Arguments* 204). In *Taken* these mythic figures are certainly not "natural." They provide evidence of contra-diction within several different symbolic systems that Marlatt transgresses.

centrality” of Marlatt’s strategic essentialisms construct a speaking lesbian intersubject who undergoes an erasure of proper authority that cannot reterritorialize the nonfoundational flow of the heterogeneous real.

The spiralling return of *différance* in symbolic inscription reveals the movement of lesbian desire between the layers of territorial, contextually located narratives as Suzanne positions herself as “guardian of this gorgeous mother” (43). At the same time, Suzanne questions her own Western reterritorializing appropriations in an exclusive focus on the construction of a desiring and desired mother in a lesbian continuum that ignores the Oedipal colonization of nonWestern men as feminized objects, without the speaking and desiring power of the phallus, in the Western imperialist seizure of deterritorialized property. Suzanne’s resistant questioning of imperialist complicity exposes the absurdity of the Oedipal symbolic by “Deterritorializing Oedipus into the world instead of reterritorializing everything in Oedipus and the family” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 10). Reterritorializing everything into an alternative lesbian ‘family romance’ would only continue to colonize sense differently.

Deterritorializing the power of Oedipus through a territorial rudeness enacts a Bhabhaesque seizure of the symbolic in the time-lag between the fictional/mythological inscriptions of the white goddess-mother¹⁴ replete with the plenitude of full presence and the present fictional/mythological erasure of female corporeal presence and desire in

¹⁴In *The White Goddess*, Robert Graves reads the literary and religious coding of poetry and the alphabet to reveal a chronological battle between matriarchal and patriarchal symbolic language in the aboriginal, pagan societies of what is now the United Kingdom.

Oedipal language and subjectivity. The present performance of matriarchal and patriarchal presences coded in language spiral into the negation of an essential Oedipal separation of language and corporeality, subjects and objects, and open spaces in the heterogeneous surfaces of language to create lesbian desiring fictions. The partial bodies of corporeal and linguistic intersubjects appear, like the ghosts inscribed by the pain of regulatory oppression that ties them to a particular location, “in certain places, hostile or friendly, seeping out at this bend in the road. . . . The spirit power of those who had once lived there . . . that could evade rational control” (30). The territorial rudeness that resists the reterritorialization of a deterritorialized drift between bodies and languages creates a ghostly becoming in narrative. As Hilary Clark argues, such becoming under fictional erasure displaces the painful inscriptions of the mother in *How Hug a Stone* in an allegorical process of memory and forgetting that creates a Derridean “‘phantom-text’ . . . [that is] always unstable, always already deconstructing or undermining itself” (6). The territorial rudeness of contra-diction in the struggle to gain, but not control, a space for desiring lesbian intersubjectivity in the quantum connections across the heterogeneous and hybrid particles of holey languages and bodies creates a ghostly haunting of lesbian desire that cannot be pinned to any categorical location or identity.

Chapter 10. The War Machine of a Noncategorical, Lesbian Intersubjectivity

An intersubject is not an Oedipally individuated subject split between unconscious repressed need and conscious demand; neither is it an organized ego nor a self-determining subject. An intersubject is not body or language and cannot belong to any categories of identity. An intersubject is a body without organs, a mobile relation that develops between contextual locations and which, therefore, cannot remain identical to any static positionality or categorical location. An intersubject belongs neither to the Lacanian ‘real’ nor to the symbolic but haunts the space in which virtual probabilities, historical conditions, and fictions are real. Marlatt’s fictional-autobiographical strategy of “writing for your life” (*Readings from the Labyrinth* 127) inscribes a “desiring writing” that is neither separated from nor identical with the author. She calls *Ana Historic* an “autobiographical novel of invention” (“On *Ana Historic* 96), which echoes Brossard’s similar opinion, in *La lettre aerienne* (52-53 / *The Aerial Letter* 75), of the inversion between fiction and reality for women. Marlatt says, in an interview with Janice Williamson, that “. . . women’s lives have been so fictionalized that to present life as a reality is a strange thing. It’s as strange as fiction” (“Speaking in and of Each Other” 26). In “Autobiographical Metafiction,” Frank Davey discusses the way Marlatt’s genre troubling pushes her fictional, poetic, and prose-memoir works “beyond those [literary categories] of autobiography and fiction” because “Both life and language in these texts is polysemous. . . .” Davey argues that Marlatt’s works “lack the impression of textual transparency . . . [and] a life reflected upon, and understood.” Yet, he insists, an autobiographical residue persists in the “generic sign of the lyric,” an authentic naming of

her mother and son in *How Hug a Stone*, and events in *Ana Historic* that parallel her life and recur in versions throughout her work (128, 129). Davey writes, “Marlatt’s open mixing of fiction and autobiography can be read, within her challenge to history, as a form of both alternate history and alternate autobiography — as a form which suggests that human subjects are not merely the sum of their acts but the sum also of their desires and imaginings” (130). Her interest “not so much on looking back as on moving towards something the poem will put together” (Marlatt, “From the Moment Outward” 79) suggests Davey’s description of “alternate history and alternate autobiography” are an anti-Oedipal, desiring production of a mobile intersubject that does not have the identity or constitutional organization of a subject.

Suzanne’s intersubjectivity is a desiring drift between various abstract, political, temporal, geographical, sexual, racial, class-based, literary, linguistic, and corporeal elements (including her biological, colonial, and lesbian families and milieus) in India, South East Asia, Australia, Britain, Canada, the Middle East, and the United States. Each of these subjects undergoes an erasure of full presence as it meets with contradictions of the others. Suzanne’s intersubjectivity is a becoming present that emerges through tangential connection. For example, part of her lesbian intersubject develops through the liminal interrelations of signifiers in the Desert Storm war in the Middle East, World War II, and the deterritorializing war machine in the theory of Deleuze and Guattari. Partial presences enable a drift between the surfaces of inscription whose differences would not be able to connect across the complete otherness of full presence in corporeal, linguistic, or subject bodies. Full presence would only inscribe its opposite: the complete otherness

of separation, absence, and death. Suzanne is not interested in Esme's "body there on the bed, brown deathspots already making their way to the surface of her skin" (24). But an intersubjectivity of partial presences in desiring connection creates lines of escape from the singularity of hierarchically oppositional inscription and enables a movement between figure and ground that does not enact the violence of regulation by the super-ego nor the violence of objectification. Intersubjectivity, in *Taken*, inscribes the decoding war machine of transgressive lesbian desiring analysis and the desiring connections of an anti-Oedipal lesbian body without organs.

Marlatt deploys the figure of ghosts who hauntingly return in impossible narratives of wholeness and bliss. The fiction of plenitude is a strategic necessity for female and lesbian desiring intersubjects whose material needs have not been met in the symbolic construction of the warring oppositional narrative that divides body from language. In her earlier investigation into hybridity, "In the Month of Hungry Ghosts," Marlatt writes, "Buddhism says it is want that chains us to the world, us 'hungry ghosts.' & I see (just as I stands for the dominant ego in the world when you is not capitalized), that I want too much . . ." (70). The distinction between "I" as the ego-organization of the dominant subject contrasts with the wanting "I" that is the feminine object of desire inscribed by lack and the absent maternal origin of the (masculinist) speaking subject. Buddhism's ghostly embodiment of desire ties the ghost to the world of material conditions rather than to the Lacanian gap between the unknowable original need and its inadequate worldly representation (in language, in the *méconnaissance* that creates the object of desire). In *Taken*, the haunting of the subject whose material needs have not

been met returns as a ghostly desire for the plenitude of full connection in the utopian Sapphic island under erasure: “another zone you feel halfway up the road . . . ghosts who can’t leave the scene of their interrupted loves and intentions” (38). The abduction of the mother’s body in the language of desire, the abduction of desire from the “surfaces of sense” (Brossard), the abduction of lesbian desire, and the abduction of eroticism from female intersubjective desiring relations (see my discussion of Kristeva’s homophobia in “Holey Bodies”) create a material void of painful inscription. Lori says in her resistance to Suzanne’s occupation by ghosts, “We know about women’s desire, we know the material conditions that must be changed to satisfy it” (99). But material conditions for change must include an explosion of the concept of materials themselves. By deregulating the categorical containment of corporeal, linguistic, geographical, historical, racial, sexual, temporal, national, literary, theoretical, and abstract bodies, Marlatt opens the quantum spaces and energies to make new material and narrative in process. The materials that construct language and knowledge are not solid substances but heterogeneous particles and mobile connections.

Suzanne’s desire for displaced material presence and intersubjective connection with both her mother and her lover haunt the narrative of separation. In Lori’s absence, Suzanne writes,

I want to write you here, translate you, into this fabulous air so drenched with the syllables of birds. I want to pour you into this bowl of misty half-light, everything merged, submerged — our island dawn, just beginning . . .

I still write *our*, just as I long to write *you* without separation . . .

Just as family, the idea of family with its unbroken bond, haunts our connection. A thread of magic litanies running back, uncut, like Ariadne's to a safe place. (ellipses textual; 77)

In Marlatt's narrative, the fabulous desire for a love that surpasses Oedipal individuation and connects bodies returns as a writing haunted by the "affective force of the violated taboo" that Elizabeth Meese describes as an erotic twisting of desiring connection: "Lesbian : vision is a torque differential machine, relating me to you. Because I am always approaching you/we who have no definition, the absence of definition consigns us to more writing, no endings . . ." (94). In a body without organs, there is no mirror to reflect the organization of the subject into a coherent object. There is no definition. And, as Luce Irigaray writes, "Alice" has always been on the other side of the looking glass, without a "'proper' name" (*This Sex* 24). Irigaray's deconstruction of phallogocentric desire reveals the displacement of women as misrecognized objects of phallic desire, Lacan's *petit a*, who do not have the "proper" position of the desiring subject who struggles against the commodified definition of the mirror stage and displacement in language. By appropriating without fidelity the absence of Suzanne's and Esme's location as proper, speaking, and desiring subjects, and the phallic absence of Esme's and Lori's proper definition as desired objects, Marlatt's lesbian "desiring writing" opens the spaces between the binary separations body/language, mother/child, and subject/object. Beverley Curran writes, in *Taken* ". . . the lesbian body swim[s] with the words of memory and mother against the current, but with the drift that moves language in new directions" and challenges the separation of the lesbian daughter and the heterosexual mother (56). A

lesbian desire of Sapphic plenitude under erasure connects mother and daughter, dissolves the binary distinction of subject/object in an intersubjectivity, and links bodies with languages in a movement outside of phallogocentrism that returns through the explosion of categorical definition with affective intensity in Suzanne's inscription of desiring presence. As Meese writes, "Love plots" (99).

The repressed text of the unspoken, in the textual ellipses of the above passage from *Taken*, spirals in the endless plot of love toward the different alignments with the categories of nation, race, class, geography, history, and gender that already occupy and fragment any Sapphic island of blissful lesbian union with the differently emplotted intersubjectivities of the mothers, daughters, and lovers. The textual ellipses return to the impossibility of fabulous unity in a Sapphic ancestry. Lori is in the process of leaving Suzanne because of their differences. Opposing the arboreal Oedipal family narrative with the arboreal script of Sapphic ancestry takes the first deconstructive move by reversing the hierarchy of the binary. But in refusing the categorical violence within each, Marlatt puts the Sapphic space under an erasure that returns as a ghostly residual of lesbian desire that haunts the narrative in which there is no "safe place." The Derridean risk of violence cannot be avoided in "the different strands of our story," except, perhaps, by "steaming off-course into . . . evasive action" (78) as Charles does when he escapes Japanese attack and begins work with the secret war codes of memory and forgetting in the supplementary "'Cerberus, addition to Navy Office'" (78). Cerberus, the three-headed guard of the many rivered underworld allows spirits to enter but none to return. In *Taken*,

unlike Marlatt's earlier texts, the Sapphic ghost can only return under erasure,¹ between the ebb and flow, the connection and separation, in the drift of the liminal space between the island and the "main" of the "larger narrative that builds and builds . . . toward what end?" (86). *Taken* inscribes the rhizomatic movement of partial presences in a lesbian body without organs that connect with, but are unable to contain and sublimate, differences of other categorical inscriptions.

This transgressive nomadic space of lesbian desire that undoes solid categories of identity acknowledges the complicity of lesbian desire with the grand war narratives that construct inside/outside around the heterosexual/homosexual binary: "A wet morning here and the war there in the late afternoon of the desert — they coexist" (37). However, Marlatt also resists lesbian complicity with binary regulation that inscribes categorical opposition in her transgressive negotiations with the undecidable violence of a war machine that deregulates controlled space. Arguing against Lori's disgust with the capitalist enterprise of Desert Storm, Suzanne thinks,

. . . I am caught in the meshes of defending brutality to stop brutality. Tuned to a consuming serial drama we begin to think like them as the space around us fills with controversy —

Then how could we trace our fingers over skin with its delicate opening of

¹In *Vancouver Poems*, *Steveston*, and *Zócalo*, the other is recuperated into a lesbian erotics that claims both a space and place for lesbian or female desire. In *How Hug a Stone* and *Touch to My Tongue*, feminine mythologies pose as fictions (not essential origins or truths) for the construction of lesbian desire and desiring connections between women. However, the categories lesbian and women are not deconstructed to the same degree as in *Taken*.

pores as our bodies respond, frond by frond, uncurling in the wet? How could I plant my hand around your breast, suck your nipple into grandeur as we spilled into luxuriant time, no-time, just the gulf of an island — when this continues over there, this trapped dying among those driven to war. (38)

The “grandeur” of the strategically essentialized lesbian body leaps into majestic vertical alignment with the heroic subject of narrative (the I) to seize the time-line and inscribe an alternative symbolic knowledge in terms of lesbian affective, emotional coding that creates value. As Marlatt says in her interview with Williamson, “Woman’s body is never present in its own desire, so if you start writing about it, you have to combat . . . taboo. . . . The only way you can bring the significance of our sexual being into the language is by making it so present that you can’t get around it, you can’t deny it, you can’t euphemize it” (186). Yet the grand Sapphic narrative that fights against political censure to inscribe the presence of a lesbian subject also enacts a spiralling undecidability of “brutality to stop brutality.” The phrase “how could we” echoes both an exclusionary criticism of the prioritization of lesbian struggle within the self/other binary of the oppositional war narrative that constructs hierarchical value and a contradictory assertion that lesbian desire could not exist without the war energy that challenges heteropatriarchal valuation. As Spivak argues, the spiralling return of *différance* in the (prohibited) essentialist subject who is undercut by complicity with the regulatory regimes of power enables an intervention that is both political and deconstructive in the transgressive negotiation from within to “digest and incorporate . . . rather than simply disavow . . . in profound and justified reaction against” (*Outside* 115). Marlatt’s

catachrestic lesbian subject under erasure pushes toward the outside from within and deploys “the structures of enabling violence” (Spivak, *Outside* 145) that make possible a lesbian subjectivity. Yet, simultaneously, she sets loose the nomadic war machine that writes between figure and ground and transgresses the organized space of either pro- or anti-war, figure or oppositional figure, category or anti-category.

A certain “dread” accompanies Suzanne’s deconstructive opening of the deterritorializing, nomadic war machine with no subject and no object — a fear of disappearing, becoming invisible (rather than the Deleuzian immanence of becoming molecular). In the nomadic space between oppositional category and anti-category, Suzanne fears the potential of the deregulated war machine to reterritorialize homophobia and gynophobia under the guise of antiessentializing theoretical capitalism. Lori says of Desert Storm with disgust, “And to think it’s all for oil” (38). Capital and oil are both fluid substances that function as vectors of deterritorialization. And, while Spivak agrees with Deleuze and Guattari that “Capital is antiessentializing because it is the abstract as such,” she insists that *capital* and *capitalism* must be analyzed differently to reveal the reterritorializing effects of political management through capitalism: “Capitalism manages the contradictions inherent in capital in its own interest” (*Outside* 13, 107). In *Taken*, the Japanese invasion of South-East Asia that routs the European colonizers poses as an Asian liberation only to replace one colonizer with another.² Through this historic

²In a discussion of *Steveston*, Shirley Chew provides historical material that supports the resonance in *Taken* of a Japanese liberation of South East Asia during World War II. Chew writes, “The drive behind Japan’s military intervention was economic, the creation of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. At the same time many Japanese believed

oppositional war, Marlatt inscribes the potential for a homophobic and gynophobic essentialism to be replaced by a homophobic and gynophobic anti-essentialism managed in the interests of academic investments in the white masculinist components of poststructuralist theories (parts of Lacan, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari).³

Suzanne's "dread" is a fear of becoming inscribed once again in absence and lack through a reterritorialization by the dominant poststructuralist regimes of power that would prohibit as an impossibility her categorically lesbian desiring transgressions. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the war machine transgresses borders of state control and cannot remain categorically focused on a particular object. Only when the state appropriates the deterritorializing energy of the war machine does war become the commodified, organized object. Rather than having an object, the war machine that destroys state space and disorganizes categorical containment sets up a series of attacks on organized spaces. The moral devaluation of lesbianism within the binary monosexual ethical codes of society aligns homophobia with what Deleuze and Guattari describe as the universalist deterritorialization of the monotheistic religious war machine that "enter[s] . . . an outside of States where it has the possibility of undergoing a singular mutation or adaptation" (*Thousand Plateaus* 383). In the Desert Storm war in *Taken*, the deterritorialized surplus value of a mobile and global religiously inspired war machine is

that Japan's mission was to free Asia from Western colonialism and this could only be achieved if it were to become the stabilizing force in the region" (62).

³I do not intend by this list to exclude female theorists. But the heteropatriarchal investments of theorists such as Julia Kristeva, who most clearly belongs to this group, come back to a fidelity to Lacan.

reterritorialized and coded by the singular gaze of “experts” (*Taken* 37), clearly not Derrida’s deconstructive methodology of rhizomatic transgression across disciplinary boundaries as a “bricoleur.” The deterritorialized excess of the war machine in the nomadic smooth space of the desert — “a tactician’s dream” (*Taken* 37) — connects with the wet utopian morning of plenitude under erasure in Suzanne’s nomadic lesbian space and threatens lesbian desire with the monotheistic moral fervour of a heteropatriarchal war machine.

In *Taken*, Suzanne fears the monological fervour of a religious war machine that can turn on the surfaces of inscription from its objective in the Middle East to lesbian desire as the enemy target of a heterosexual maternal narrative that ‘passes’ by taking on the phallic masquerade that hides the “*horror of nothing to see*” (Irigaray, *This Sex* 26). Her “dread” wells from the state reterritorialization of a religious war machine in Desert Storm that affectively codes the oppositional other as evil: “. . . Bush keeps pronouncing Saddam as Satan with a *d*, underlining apocalyptic fears so he can conjure ‘a new world order’ against ‘a pan-Arab jihad’” (35). Saddam Hussein is a ““mad-man”” who “takes on the world’s mightiest power . . . invoking ‘the Mother of Battles’” (56-57). The war of division between heterosexual/homosexual, male/female, and language/body connect with Desert Storm and World War II through chains of private secrets, war ciphers, and the masquerade. The “SMART FROCKS” (45) that mask female undernourishment and lack of pregnancy in World War II nomadically connect with the “smart bombs” of Desert Storm that disguise the massacre of women and children (30). Charles’s war ciphers nomadically connect with the secrecy of the closet: “It’s difficult for you to find a

private place to call me from, you say, and I am not supposed to call you. I feel your body fading into the track of intentions occupying where you are now.” For Lori, the issue is clear: “Dread you would say is the price one pays for not taking a stand. Pro-war or anti-war” (35). But in a war between lesbian and family values, a grey space of indeterminacy opens if a lesbian’s first love is her mother.⁴ An anti-war stance would avoid complicity with the warring narrative of oppositional binaries but would disable an analytic lesbian war machine of desire that decodes the Oedipal family narrative. An anti-war aporia between contradictions also loses the political agency to defend local, territorial, heterogeneous differences from state occupation, either within or between different nations. Yet a pro-war stance remains complicit with the violence of the singular, dominant self of colonization and occupation. In *Taken* the category of war itself becomes undecidable in the movement between the objects of war and the war machine of deregulation. Marlatt negotiates the shifting political lines of resistance and complicity in the enabling violence of the war machine with no object that transgresses closed categorical spaces to encourage a heterogeneity of specific and territorial differences that must include, but cannot be reterritorialized by, a lesbian body without organs.

⁴Marlatt writes, in her notes for 2 June 1995, that the erotic connection between the mother and the daughter is a “haunting connection: mother-residue . . . or what is haunting is her ideal (self), the ideal she fosters (of an ideal daughter!) in the feminine — difficult to root out since mother as first love object = first model of how to be female” (*Readings from the Labyrinth* 216). Peggy Kelly argues that in *Ana Historic* Marlatt reconfigures the mother-daughter relationship through the lesbian relation of Zoe and Annie to counteract Ina’s attempt to “teach her daughters to conform to a heterosexual economy of desire” (75). But in *Taken* both the mother and the lesbian daughters/lovers Lori and Suzanne are written in conflictual connections between the binaries of between-women desire and heterosexual family.

A mobile positionality inscribed by the intersubjectivity of the reader's movement between Lori, Suzanne, and Esme remains necessary in order to avoid lesbian and female disappearance without changing the heteropatriarchal system. Suzanne's "dread" that a lesbian desiring politics could be lost in the mobile space between categories is realized by Frank Davey's acknowledgement of "the novel as dramatizations of a conflict between [American] materialist and French feminisms." He also reduces Marlatt's noncategorical theoretical location by arguing, "Suzanne's persistence in interpreting Lori's actions through her own theories . . . operates as the novel's own refusal of materialist answers" ("Women's Lives" 19). Contrarily, Marlatt's negotiations between materialist and deconstructive feminisms are what open the ground and deconstruct the violent inscription of sameness into the contradictions of categorical location while maintaining a specificity about the historical, geographical, corporeal, literary, linguistic, and theoretical sites bodies move through. *Taken* is replete with materialist specificity that cannot be dismissed: a hybrid mixture of local languages; the pain, hunger, fear, and death of the women in prisoner-of-war camps; the enclosure of Esme within the domestic maternal narrative and of Charles within the public heroic narrative; the construction of desire as the product of inadequate materials of representations in order to regulate social discontent; the differences between the views of war that Suzanne and Lori hold because of their historical locations (Suzanne is born during the colonial flight caused by the invasion of Penang, while Lori is born on the Western-American frontier of expansion without threat); the violent censorship of homophobia; the hybridity of colonizers that increases with Esme's domestic situation of proximity to the servants and exclusion from

the masculinist public sphere of white colonization; newspaper documents on the weapons/tools of Desert Storm; the oppositional narrative foundations of figure conquering ground that control the constitutive development of the Oedipal subject. The movement “beyond the reach of evidence” (130) in the conclusion is not a transcendental leap beyond material specificity. Instead, it is the act of *dérive* (see “Part II: Desiring Speed”) that begins from particular locations and opens new perspectives, bodies, and subjectivities in a quantum process that is an event rather than a substance. The act of *dérive* produces fictions, molecular markers of temporary constituent elements that reveal the indistinguishability of figure from ground, or element from force, and are, ultimately, unpredictable: “The stories we invent and refuse to invent ourselves by, all unfinished . . .” (130). The mobility of matter is essential: a quantum science of holey constitutive elements that are also forces in collision, fission, and virtual probability.

Contrary to Davey’s reading of Marlatt’s refusal of American feminist materialism in *Taken*, Marlatt has consistently demonstrated an interest in both American and French feminist theory. Barbara Godard discusses Marlatt’s development of a female subject in *What Matters* through a negotiation between the writing of American feminist theorists, such as Dorothy Dinnerstein and Nancy Chodorow and French feminist theorists such as Julia Kristeva (489). In a journal note from 9 August 1991 in *Readings from the Labyrinth*, Marlatt cites the French and American feminist theorists “Chodorow, Cixous, Rich, Kristeva, Daly” among her influences (152). In *Taken*, American feminist theory on the mother-daughter relation (Chodorow), the lesbian continuum (Rich), and the spinning, erotically analytic movement of words (Daly) persists (although always in a

mobile “*délire*”) within the geographic, historic, linguistic, corporeal positions of women so that lesbian and feminist desire cannot be reterritorialized in an unchallenged heteropatriarchal framework. The corporeal, analytic, and desiring bodies of Suzanne and Lori are what make temporary material connections: “Breaking the marriage script, we broke the familial ties we each were meant to perpetuate. And yet, so many strands of the scripts that compose us wove the narrative, then unreadable, unread, that made me recognize you when you walked into that crowded café” (77-78). But the differences of these material and abstract bodies also drive them apart: “*We just don’t live in the same reality*” (126). The title “Between Continuity and Difference” that Brenda Carr uses for the interview in which Marlatt describes the relationship between her past writing influenced by *TISH* and Black Mountain practices and her current lesbian and feminist embodied, local, material, and anti-Oedipal writing applies equally well to Marlatt’s position between American materialism and French feminism in *Taken*.

Even though not substantially embodied in full presence or in the present, the effect of the intersubject is not in its *méconnaissant* absence. The ex-lover’s and dead (m)other’s inscriptions on Suzanne’s hybrid textual and corporeal bodies inscribe a ghostly presence of intersubjectivity in the deterritorialized narrative movement between figure and ground that has no (fixed) subject and no (fixed) object of desire. Suzanne, as the first-person narrator, creates the linguistic effect of a subject, but the ‘subject’ and focus of the novel and of Suzanne’s subjectivity is her background, especially her mother, whose hybrid position between subject and object, colonizer and colonized, heterosexual and homosexual, enables her to escape Oedipal colonization as she returns the gaze of

difference toward her inscription as object of phallic desire. The intersubjectivity between Suzanne's inscriptions of her mother and Lori and the inscriptions of Suzanne by Lori and Esme (which affects Suzanne's inscriptions of both) positions the between-women "desiring writing" of intersubjectivity in a lesbian desire of connection, a touching between the subjectivities of linguistic and corporeal bodies that resists separation and abjection through what Spivak calls the para-centrality of the subject under erasure, rather than the decentred subject or the death of the subject.

Esme's intersubjective position between her inscription as an object of Oedipal desire and as a subject who exceeds the phallocentric regulation of her subject-as-object means that her Oedipal inscription remains partial. As Robert J.C. Young argues via the anti-Oedipal theory of Deleuze and Guattari, "'Oedipus is always colonization pursued by other means, it is the interior colony . . . it is our intimate colonial education' . . ." (171). However, in his postcolonial theory of hybridity influenced by Bhabha's insistence that the colonized also inscribe the colonizer, Young argues that Deleuze and Guattari simplify "the complexities of the way in which cultures interact, degenerate and develop over time in relation to each other . . ." (173). He calls for a palimpsestic model to "acknowledge the extent to which cultures were not simply destroyed but rather layered on top of each other, giving rise to struggles that themselves only increased the imbrication of each with the other and their translation into increasingly uncertain patchwork identities" (173-74). Suzanne focuses on the moments in Esme's life where Oedipal inscription is contested by the enormous contextual shifts between the inside and the outside, the moments in which Esme is the production of a desiring intersubject

beyond her Oedipal inscription in a specular masquerade that makes her a desired object by concealing “*the horror of nothing to see*” in a “double movement of exhibition and of chaste retreat” (Irigaray, *This Sex* 26).

In the photograph, Suzanne glimpses Esme as a desiring intersubject “before the children,” before her exclusion as a daughter and enclosure within the heteropatriarchal regulation of the maternal and domestic ground that limits the uncertainty of desiring production by closing the hole with the child-phallus. The photograph, a sign system of partial surfaces rather than an unsignifiable signification of an essential presence beyond the sign, reveals a subject/object deregulation that exceeds the representational inscription of misrecognized objects. Curran writes, “There is movement in the photograph, connections behind and beyond it” (62). The connections between bodies and stories, between the “rituals and scripts [that] contain us,” enable change (Curran 63). Esme’s excessively ornamental hat that will not be tied to a practical purpose or aim catches the war machines of the wind and sea, the enormous outside of nature⁵ that continually decomposes the specular masquerade that constructs her as an object of desire. In the contaminated present performance, she cannot remain true to a pure and identical repetition of the Oedipal law:

Sea smashing up around her like frozen lace, she posed by a crevasse, Antarctic
wind whipping her fashionably baggy shorts, demure white ankle socks, hand

⁵Marlatt says, “. . . nature itself is that larger body that we move inside of and that is beyond our control. . . . Maybe it’s dependent on a very west coast sense of nature, which is always growing out of control, despite urban efforts to control it.” (“From the Moment Outward” 81-82).

gripping the impossible picture hat. Black straw, with a crown so flat it was almost unwearable, nothing to detract from a gigantic brim asplash in magenta, green, sunburst raffia flowers . . . The hat! tip it back, back! he must have shouted as she struggled to comply, still trying to keep her look for the cameras as buffets of polar wind kept pushing it down. And so the moment lived on in black and white: evidence that she had once worn it. (24)

Esme escapes the meaning of the binary phallogentric gaze of black and white, evidence of the subject/object split, even as she is inscribed within it. The crevasse between territorial nature and its deterritorializing and reterritorializing occupation by the social codes of regulatory order open into an uncontrollable intersubjectivity and a ghostly “hunger: for the life unlived . . . something unresolved and ongoing” (24-25). A politics of desire for material change (not of the necessary inadequacy of materials to satisfy desire) opens in Esme’s masquerade as an object that will not remain still and objectified, even for her own regulatory desire, as it meets the war machine of enormous deregulation outside discursive construction.⁶

Lines of flight beyond the masquerade of the desired object also open in Esme’s

⁶Eleonara Rao argues that Ana’s “journey to the New World entails a transformation, a finding of the self through a losing of the self” in *Ana Historic*. Part of Ana’s immigrant loss includes “The condition of *dépaysement*, of being out of one’s familiar element.” Agreeing with Maurice Blanchot, Rao avers, “. . . the loss of mother country . . . [is] also ‘une manière plus authentique de résider, d’habiter sans habitude; l’exil, c’est l’affirmation d’une nouvelle relation avec le Dehors’” (319). While I agree with the idea of movement toward that which is outside regulation by social and linguistic codes, there is nothing more or less ‘authentic’ in Suzanne’s transgressions of nation, gender, sexuality, race: all are posed as fictions to live by, although Suzanne’s transgressions are less violent fictions.

intersubjective desiring resistance that reveals nothing in Charles's a-propriation of what is not *propre*, not her own. This folds what she gives (away) as masquerade, as supplement, into what is "taken." A ghostly residue remains as the effect of presence that is not what has been given/taken in masquerade. As Bhabha argues, the differential, death-dealing eye of negation in the colonized subject deploys an absence "that is the beginning of presencing" (9). Within the seeming stasis of the black-and-white photograph that contains Esme in the binary frame, the "kickpleat of her frock billows out," and the "cloud of white net" opens into possibility as a Derridean flight of the truth of untruth in representation. While this connects to the phallic split that displaces the subject as an object of representation (*méconnaissance*), Esme's untruth as a woman in phallic masquerade remains politically focused as the attempted reterritorialization of abstract drift in the patriarchal colonization of women. However, as the photograph reveals, such reterritorialization can never completely overwrite the difference of a resisting female intersubject. As Young argues, the layers of palimpsestic presence persist and continue to inscribe difference, even for Esme whose 'subject' does not measure the distance but intentionally takes herself to be the object of phallic inscription.

While the nomadism of Esme's masquerade enables lines of escape, it also reveals the double violence of her inscription as a object of desire that not only lacks the propriety of a desiring subject but also lacks as a 'real' object. She poses as the phallus, the object of a "hom(m)o-sexual" desire (Irigaray, *This Sex* 171). In *Ana Historic, How Hug a Stone*, and *Taken*, Marlatt's investigation of the historical absence of women in the histories of nation, narrative, genealogy, and subjects concurs with Irigaray's claim, in

This Sex Which Is Not One, that women are improper subjects, commodities of exchange whose names and identities change according to their use-value in a phallogentric economy (170-91). While this impropriety enables a transgression of regulative mechanisms, Irigaray stresses, "The fact remains that this masquerade requires an *effort* on her part for which she is not compensated. Unless her pleasure comes simply from being chosen as an object of consumption or of desire by masculine 'subjects.' And, moreover, how can she do otherwise without being 'out of circulation'?" (84). The photograph that reveals Esme's excessive absence as blank (white) ground to Charles's dark figure is framed by the "omen behind them" that emphasizes the importance of the proper figure: the "Australian officer . . . sole up in marching step" and the "woman in a dress of thin stripes" with "The black seam of her stocking [that] runs straight down to her high-heeled and very black shoe." Rather than thinking about the difference between her subject and its objectified inscription, this woman is "[p]robably thinking about money, balancing whatever has caught her eye with whatever is in her chequebook" (5). The hierarchical valuation of figure and ground ties Esme into the proper economy of exchange, war, nation, gendered dominance, and the binary good/evil of war-torn destiny. The vertical stripes of the woman's dress and sheer stockings (veils) evoke the heavy weight of gravity, the arboreal alignment of the masquerade of woman with state regulation, and the importance of the proper that tips the balance against flight. Masquerade has a heavy toll that must be accounted for so that the figure of woman as the truth of untruth does not lose its historical-political focus and become Derrida's disembodied figure for philosophy itself (*Spurs*).

In order to write against objectified lack and the regulatory violence of the super-ego, Marlatt focuses on a rhizomatic and hybrid movement in the spaces between multiple subject/object binaries that distinguish figure from ground. On a nonhierarchical, level plane that is composed of heterogeneous sign systems and inscriptions, she creates a supplementary history that is not Esme's essence revealed in the gap but her possibility⁷ revealed on the surfaces without the hidden depth of a proper subject. The space between figure and ground enables a desiring presence to cure absence by writing in the quantum holes, gaps, crevasses of unstable surfaces between the binaries. On the surfaces without fidelity to the originary intent of a proper, speaking subject (figure), a ghostly "tiff" (*tiffin*) of nourishment and aggression can appear in a "windy oikos" of performative becomings that inscribe under erasure the desiring movement of the intersubject which is creative life energy itself (*Salvage* 27). The ghostly space between contaminates the "ghos-ti" inhabitants of the prohibited subject and resisting object that are the host, guest, stranger, and enemy all held hostage within the Oedipal plot of the family romance (*How*

⁷Céline Chan writes that in *Ana Historic* Annie takes the name of Torrent from "the torrent that flowed from her mother in anger rather than love" and, thus, "discharges her burden of daughterly guilt — unElectrafies herself — and, in so doing, folds her mother into the lesbian relationship that is now imminent" (70). In *Taken*, Suzanne's exploration of Esme's desire that escapes its colonial and patriarchal representation establishes a between-women desiring movement that is anti-Oedipal and on a lesbian continuum where their positions within heterosexuality and homosexuality touch and mirror each other. Yet neither Esme (*Taken*) nor Ina (*Ana Historic*) can be completely folded into "the lesbian relationship." Nor can they be taken as inverted models for a Chodorowian reproduction of 'lesbianism' (sic; "motherhood"). They create partial sites in a developing lesbian flight of desire, rather than a sedimentation of identification.

Hug a Stone 49).⁸ The “horror of nothing to see” in the hole of desire that depends on the unspeakable essence of the (female) (non)subject becomes joyously sensible on the surfaces where the quantum and molecular spaces between elements are part of surface inscription. Yet, while they become perceivable, they are not substantively containable as objects of a symbolic inscription that depends on a split between subject and object that produces a solidified objectification of meaning.

Suzanne questions the possibility of her own violent occupation of Esme by writing her as a major part of her own desiring production.⁹ Yet in the space between figure and ground, between subject and object, Suzanne continues to resist the appropriation of a subject through Hegelian appropriation of the other. Suzanne inscribes the between-women intersubjectivity of partial presences connecting across differences. If there is no definition of a proper subject or displaced object but only surfaces of effect and affect, Esme might fulfill her desire. Suzanne writes, “. . . if only she could have . . . *given* herself — just once, just once holding nothing back.” In the binary mirror that reflects and privileges the masculinist subject, figure, or war hero, Esme “always feel[s] instead it

⁸I draw on Lianne Moyes’s reading of the etymology of “*ghos-ti*” in relation to the foundations of Western philosophy in Marlatt’s *How Hug a Stone*. Moyes provides an excellent analysis of the differential position of the mother and daughter as the guest/host who are strangers to and containers of phallogocentric epistemology (“Writing, the Uncanniest of Guests”).

⁹In the meeting of history, fiction, and silence in *Ana Historic*, Linda Hutcheon writes that Annie finds space in the gaps to open up the exclusions of “that male reifying glance” (“Telling Accounts” 18). In *Taken*, Suzanne similarly investigates excluded issues of gender and sexuality. However, she also questions exclusions around issues of race, nation, language, hybridity, globalism in order to evade the categorical containment of the feminine.

was being taken from her" (11). Responding to Derrida's theory of the gift that takes or narcissistically returns as a favour owed to the giver, Cixous notes the masculinist focus of giving as an elevation of authority, pleasure, power, and ego. In the feminine, Cixous writes, "She is able not to return to herself, never settling down, pouring out, going everywhere to the other. She . . . is how-far-being-reaches. If there is a self proper to woman, paradoxically it is her capacity to deappropriate herself without self-interest" (87), "her way of self-constituting a subjectivity that splits apart without regret . . . without the ceaseless summoning of the authority called Ego" (90). Not only is Esme's pregnancy figured as a meeting between self and other (Charles), "a living merger of their two selves" (44), but pregnancy itself inscribes an intersubjective meeting of bodies and subjects that neither consumes the one nor becomes the other. Pregnancy alters both in a placental mediation between different bodies that contradicts any originary unity between mother and child (Irigaray, *Je, Tu, Nous* 37-44). Suzanne writes herself and her mother in an intersubjective relationship that is not based on oppositional difference, sameness, nor "the smallest, most archaic, and most uncertain of differences" through which Kristeva characterizes the "regressive extinction of symbolic capabilities" in the "enceinte" "elsewhere" of the maternal body (*Desire in Language* 240). The differences between postcolonial, lesbian Suzanne and colonial, heterosexual Esme are enormous. Yet Suzanne inscribes points where the similarities and differences can touch and intersubjectively alter each other without consuming the other in appropriation. An intersubject does not refer to an originary essence but can only exist as a presence that changes in relation to other people, things, animals, thoughts, words, places, contexts.

Because an intersubject is a changeable body without organs rather than a subject or object, the psychoanalytic distinction between identification and desire in the formation of the ego loses force. In an early article prior to the influence of Deleuze and Guattari on her theory, Barbara Godard argues that in *What Matters* Marlatt develops an anti-Oedipal, female presence that is not “based on lack, on castration, as is the Lacanian description of the constitution of the subject.” Godard draws on Nancy Chodorow’s theory, in *The Reproduction of Mothering*, that “. . . the development of the woman is more complex than that of the man, involving the recognition of both identity to her mother and difference from her father.” The ability to “[r]ecogniz[e] herself in her (m)other, a process of doubling, is central to her access to the subject position” (“‘Body I’” 489). However, in *Taken*, Suzanne is neither identified with nor oppositionally different from either gender of parent. Instead, she follows Derrida’s insistence on the deferral of difference within the category of the same in the double affirmative “yes and yes” (which is an acceptance of “no”). This positions Suzanne in erotic proximity (but not identity) with her mother. The body without organs that is the novel inscribes the intersubjective relation of Suzanne and her mother that connects between and beyond the similarities and differences of both, between the partial inscriptions and bodies of multiple figures and grounds. Without identification with the mother, but with intensive lines of connection, Suzanne resists the self/other Hegelian binary that would inscribe the other as self in a gendered, binary process of identification.

An intersubjectivity that does not assimilate with or consume the other requires the inscription of differences to enable both a nonHegelian relation between individuals

and a nonfoundationalist coalition politics in a feminism or lesbianism “which isn’t one” (Marlatt, *Readings from the Labyrinth* 129).¹⁰ In “Reading and Writing Between the Lines,” Marlatt and Warland describe the intersubjectivity of lesbian lovers as reciprocity rather than pre-Oedipal merger: “not the same so much as reciprocal, moving back and forth between our sameness and differences. . . . the holes we make in such a definite body leak meaning we splash each other with” (80-81). This sense of reciprocity between the similarities and differences of lesbians, as well as the reciprocity between heterosexual mothers and lesbian daughters, touches on Irigaray’s sense of a between-women erotics of abundance in language that challenges the subject/object binary by

¹⁰Focusing on “[c]ertain collaborative forms of writing [that] lesbianize authorship” (154), Lorraine York writes, “The lesbian collaborator subverts the subject-object distinction . . . for she is simultaneously a speaking subject and a speaking object,” which disrupts “the capitalist-patriarchal concept of authorship as ownership” (157). York looks at various collaborations, including Daphne Marlatt and Betsy Warland’s *Double Negative*, arguing that, with the exception of the “individualized, prosaic” signatures of “D” and “B” in the central fold of the text (161), Marlatt and Warland move poetic collaboration beyond individual positionality by bringing lesbian intertexts into a communal, collaborative speaking act. However, York does not read the liminal markers of “D” and “B” as the “momentary rupture” that resists homogeneity as she does with the “native”/“nonnative” markers of difference in the responses to India of Suniti Namjoshi and Julian Hanscombe’s *Flesh and Paper* (164). York remarks that Namjoshi and Hanscombe’s text undertakes a political analysis of collaboration itself:

In case we are in danger of building collaborative authorship into a totalizing scheme, thus rendering it, like capitalist single authorship before it, an unquestioning valued entity, *Flesh and Paper* reminds us that collaboration is not a stable concept. Lesbianizing collaboration that erases the “i/I” completely would not be anticapitalist at all but hierarchical. . . . [H]omogeneity invariably masks hierarchy; the variables of class and colour, as well as the multitude of political stances that ‘lesbian’ imbricates, must not come under erasure. (164)

This space of culturally located difference in the collaborative desiring space of the term *lesbian* that is defined by female desiring relations with other women is very much part of what I (along with Kelly Oliver and others) call *intersubjectivity*.

resisting the commodification of the object with a heterogeneity of surface inscriptions. However, Marlatt's sense of lesbian reciprocity derails the sense of sameness in Irigaray's fluidly interchangeable subjects/objects. Irigaray's autoerotic equation that identifies touching "yourself" with touching "me" (*This Sex Which Is Not One* 205-18) suggests a sameness of categorical gender and the psychosis of Kristeva's vision of love between women without the split of distinction that makes desire (see chapter 9, "Holey Bodies and Languages"). Marlatt writes in journal notes for 1995: "... perhaps the mother-daughter relationship is our first ground for experiencing difference with another woman & the way it's negotiated determines our potential for future empathy/solidarity with other women" (*Readings from the Labyrinth* 213-14). Intersubjectivity emerges in the affective intensities of embracing, rejecting, and indifferent negotiations of difference.

The mother-daughter intersubjectivity in Marlatt's writing is not a pre-Oedipal dissolution of all borders and distinctions nor an Oedipal identification on the basis of gendered reproduction. It is the erotic movement "between self & other" but in which "self & other, same & different, disappear" (*Readings from the Labyrinth* 216). The intersubject moves between figure and ground, between social coding and multiple acts and bodies of decoding that provoke a deregulating resistance. "Words, worlds, lap against each other," Curran writes, so that the meaning of *taken* is "turned over and over," connected with "photography . . . culture and seduction; with giving; with the occupation of space; and the success of a seed" (65) that becomes an alternative, mobile presence. Marlatt describes the intersubjective "'self' as a knot in a larger net of relations through which fire runs, fire of connection/compassion that 'feeling-with': love, & nothing less"

(*Readings from the Labyrinth* 216). In *Taken*, Suzanne embraces a loving connection of reciprocity that must leave room for incommensurability in the multiple grounds between East and West. In the rhizomatic derailment of Suzanne's intense connections with other bodies, landscapes, languages, cultures, and contexts that alter any original materials, Marlatt inscribes an anti-Oedipal body without organs in the postcolonial, lesbian intersubject that begins to take mobile shape between differences but refuses to colonize the focus.

Marlatt's alternation between the narrative about Esme and the narrative about Suzanne inscribes a spiralling movement between the past and the present, as well as between India, South East Asia, Australia, Canada, the Middle East, the United States, and imaginary utopian and real islands.¹¹ Translation between these heterogeneous people, places, and times occurs between an intersubjective self and a sometimes lesbian (Lori), sometimes heterosexual female (Esme), sometimes heterosexual male (Charles) intersubjective otherself that destabilizes the distinction between figure and ground into a permeability of borders that opens the space for connection. Images of ferns on the Gulf island, for instance, call up the ferns in Malaysia. The historic war in the Pacific islands insists its presence into both the current Gulf War and the utopic figuration of a Sapphic island that battles to maintain the borders separating it from phallogocentric coding. Smells bring up visual images from the past. 'Foreign' words (are they foreign if language and

¹¹The real islands refer to Penang and one of the Gulf islands in the Strait of Georgia. The utopian oppositional Sapphic island that is outside heteropatriarchy and phallogocentric coding makes a tentative link between the unnamed Gulf island in British Columbia and the Gulf war of Desert Storm.

nation are already hybrid?) deregulate the coded, organizing inscriptions of the subject, perform a getting “‘lost’ in the translation” (Holbrook, “Striking Words” 12), imbricate subjects in (back)grounds and in each other, and create what Marlatt calls the holey and heterogeneously textual body of the “whole cloth . . . of ourselves” (*Readings for the Labyrinth* 126).¹²

Writing between figure and ground, Marlatt pushes against the naturalization of the Oedipal narrative in literature¹³ and challenges the masculinist inscription of narrative codes. In *Ana Historic*, she writes, “this is not a roman / ce” (67), playing against the Oedipal romance that grounds the conventional narrative subject and desired object. The

¹²Marlatt writes in “Self-Representation and Fictionalysis,”

Given the whole cloth, the truth of ourselves is so large it is almost impossible to write. It is full of holes, pulled threads (multiple lines), figures indistinct from ground.

There we run up against the reductiveness of language which wants to separate truth from fiction, figure from ground, self from other. Who’s the creator here anyway? Maybe language after all. . . . But that’s only if we can subvert its mainline story. . . . Language defines Something, the subject let’s say, as different from any thing and any other who is merely undifferentiated object. We begin to see the bias of the subject operating here and that this subject who so dominates the stage of representation is white, heterosexual, middle class, monological, probably Christian and usually male. Wherever we as women overlap with any of those aspects we inherit that bias. . . . [O]nly by altering them [these words in a language of biased hierarchical perspectives] infinitesimally, undermining what they say, bending them into knots, into not’s and un-’s, can we break the rigid difference between figure and ground which preserves that figure’s hegemony, his “truth.” (*Readings from the Labyrinth* 126-27)

¹³Teresa de Lauretis argues that the Oedipal inscription of narrative separates the heroic figure from the (back)ground, relies on a heroic figure who conquers obstacles viewed from an epic gaze that unifies cultural territory, elides women with landscape as territory he must cross, control, or vanquish, and kills their improper desires with literal murder, a desire for suicide, or the closure of marriage (“Desire in Narrative” 103-57).

separated “ce” leads to an inversion of movement in unvoiced translation: “this is not a roman / ce” virtually becomes “ceci n’est pas un roman,” and the unvoiced “e” of the French feminine mutates absence into feminine ground for resistance to such inscription in the narrative grammar of language.¹⁴ *Taken* is a story of loving relations and separations that spiral between multiple figures and multiple grounds. In the “implied synchrony” between the narratives of Suzanne’s relations to Esme and Lori, Davey writes, Lori’s “return to the United States to nurse her sick mother and her abandoning of Suzanne echo[es] Charles’s abandoning of Esme in Australia in 1942 to join the fight against the Japanese.” Further, he notes, “. . . Lori’s faith in materialist solutions” that drives the lovers apart parallels “Charles’s faith in mathematical military force” in the war that separates Esme and Charles (“Women’s Lives” 19). Yet Lori’s return to care for her sick mother also echoes Suzanne’s pre-occupation with maternal love that compels her to write her mother out of absence and cure her abjection. Suzanne writes Esme out of a patriarchal colonization of deterritorialized abstraction that makes her an object of lack and hides it under the guise of a ‘universal’ action of méconnaissance and writes her into the particular political site of her abduction. Lori’s materialist narrative twists with Suzanne’s desiring narrative and inscribes a major difference from Charles’s as it forms a lesbian ground of between-women desire. Marlatt develops doubles and triples in the similarities and differences of the characters, but the figure is never appropriated. Because

¹⁴While many feminists have taken up the issue of gender in language, Nicole Brossard’s essay “E muet mutant” examines both the political mutation of women in a gendered grammar and the potential to mutate sense by changing the grammar.

the intersubject continually shifts without the hierarchical valorization of focus or foil that would privilege or distinguish one character's position over the other's, Marlatt opens a space between figure and ground where there is no singular subject who verbs (defines) the object of desire. On this rhizomatic plane, an anti-Oedipal, lesbian *narrative* without organs emerges in the desiring connections and analytic deregulations of social and linguistic narrative order.

Marlatt writes that "... women's writing inaugurates [a large shift] as it turns what has traditionally been considered background into foreground, what has been labelled trivial into the central, what has been belittled as personal and feminine into the largely human" (*Readings from the Labyrinth* 113). Yet the ground does not simply reverse into dominance in *Taken*. Instead, a spiralling movement between figure and ground enables Marlatt to deterritorialize lesbian desire and female intersubjects without losing political and historical specificity. Esme emerges from the trivial background that conventionally mothers the figure and becomes the foreground of the novel, the central interest. On a lesbian continuum of women desiring textual, corporeal, and social subjects who are *women*, rather than a-social wombs, the intersubjectivity between Suzanne and Esme, as well as between Lori and her mother, pre-occupies Suzanne and Lori with differences of historical, geographical, political, maternal background that become central issues that separate them but are still lesbian, rather than patriarchal and, therefore, irrelevant to lesbian concern. In the secret of the closet that destabilizes the narrative of warring Hegelian opposition, the centrality of Esme recedes into the background, and Charles raises issues of what war might mean in the context of a lesbian deconstructive

narrative. Distinguishing a deterritorializing nomadic 'liberation' from the secret reterritorializing codes that enable state colonization of abstract, unregulated energy requires an aggressive lesbian translation that investigates the complex meaning of "brutality to stop brutality" (38) and resonates with the terms of Desert Storm and World War II. In "Blue Period," Marlatt says, ". . . what's irresistible for me is story and I'm always seduced by it; it's always hovering around the edges. But I see story as a kind of structure that, in [*Taken*] . . . is equivalent to a ghost. It's just hovering there. And . . . I don't want it to really develop . . ." (43). In *Taken*, the intersubjects and grounds for their formation continually shift in a kaleidoscopic movement that enacts "a narrative of brightly coloured bits, turned, turning as if to focus, and the falling patterns then" (26). This reflection, turning, and difference that begins to bring partial intersubjects into focus and then drifts into another temporary coagulation enacts a rhizomatic intensity that resists central organization. In the intersubjective space between figure and ground, Marlatt's narrative body without organs inscribes a haunting erasure of the controlling, specular gaze of the warring binary narrative that creates the méconnaissance of the subject and inscribes the becoming present of a deterritorialized lesbian desiring intersubject.

The homosexual ghost of a hybrid closet that hovers as a mobile intersubject between and within the folds of such oppositions as male/female, body/language, figure/ground, aggression/passivity, colonizer/colonized, and West/East enacts the "tempo," the rhythm of intensive connections, the ground, and the "texture" (42) that challenges the psychoanalytic construction of an individuated subject in binary war.

Marlatt's ghostly narrative inscribes Deleuzian lines of rhizomatic, nomadic flight that places less emphasis on the identity of points and more on the deterritorializing and decolonizing movement that develops touchpoints between the differences of specific, partial figures and complex, murky grounds. In the nonfoundational coalition politics of the rhizomatic issues she raises in the novel, Marlatt creates lesbian grounds for an abandoned erotic connection, which she describes as always "anti-authority" (*Readings from the Labyrinth* 47), and grounds for leaving categorical regulation without abandonment.

Part IV. The “Noise” of the “World Cracking”: Dionne Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here*

Introduction

The word *authenticity* frequently recurs in analyses of writing by marginalized groups: an *authentic* female/lesbian voice, an *authentic* Caribbean (or even black) voice.¹ Often the word is used as shorthand for a writing that inscribes difference from the phallogocentrism of a white Western symbolic. But the concept of *authenticity* falls apart in postmodern writing where there is no subject that directs speech, no homogeneous community prior to colonization, and no utopian pre-Oedipal society. Especially in Dionne Brand's view of Caribbean origin as the point of abduction and slavery, nothing is unified or separate enough to define a proper originary space for *authenticity*. In his brief and derogatory analysis of Brand's *No Language Is Neutral*, Ronald B. Hatch argues that "Brand's use of Trinidadian English can give the poetry authenticity" and lesbian desire "honesty," although he finds the volume "monotonous": "The violence of the experience is simply not rendered in language that can convey that violence" (64). His

¹An *authentic* Caribbean voice is impossible, since each nation has distinctive differences within the demotic tongue or nation language. As J. Edward Chamberlin writes, there are several dialects of English in the West Indies. Jamaican, Barbadian, Trinidadian, and Guyanese are clearly identifiable, yet in other regions, speech is recognizably different but less easy to attach to a specific island. Each area does, however, have standard and nonstandard speech. "Linguistic decorum is not a monopoly of English from somewhere in Southern England with everything else improper" (83). The idea of an *authentic* black or lesbian voice is even more impossible since issues such as the relations of nation, race, class, and culture push differences beyond categorical identification. Further, differences between recent immigration and hundreds of years of black ancestry in Canada, both in slavery and in Africville or Whylah Falls, "a village in Jarvis County, Nova Scotia" that was "[f]ounded in 1783 by African-American Loyalists seeking Liberty, Justice, and Beauty" (George Elliott Clarke, *Whylah Falls* 7) evacuate any sense in an *authentic* black Canadian voice.

dismissal of the linguistic violence in Brand's nonrepresentational art follows directly from his view of her language as *authentic*, which positions the speaker outside the colonial linguistic invasion of materiality itself as I elaborate below. Consequently, he fails to recognize Brand's investigation of the self split by the violent invasion of European colonization that names place, race, and gender as the other: a "hidden verb" in the noun that "takes inventory" (*No Language Is Neutral* 31). This is not the psychoanalytic self that is split from originary unity or the heterogeneity of the subject that is split by language and mirror organization into an object. Instead, the split occurs on the "surfaces of sense" (Brossard) through a political occupation and abduction of heterogeneity in a symbolic that enables colonization of the other in language.

The act of naming is imbricated with colonization in *No Language Is Neutral*. The place called "blanchisseuse" (6) is not simply a name but a political and reterritorializing French act of naming place, race, and female bodies. The displacement of material territory into an inferior servant of the master of meaningful empire not only enslaves the laundress ("blanchisseuse") into a position of whitening the master's clothes but bleaches and whitens herself under the colonial and imperial gaze that reduces heterogeneity to an unspeakable body. A literal translation of the Spanish roots of *manzanilla* reveals 'chamomile,' a small herbal flower. But the *i* in "Manzinilla," the name that Brand cites, points toward a colonial difference from origin that inscribes the speaking "I." Translating without fidelity to the Spanish diminutive *illa* — "spitting out the last / spun syllables for cruelty" (23) — reveals the ideological bias in a name like "Manzinilla": the 'apple' and 'block' in the translation of the word *manzana* connect the prison block (that

contains and diminishes the human value of slaves held for transport) with the consumption of black bodies to nourish empire in the triangular economy of slavery between Africa, North America and the West Indies, and Europe.² “Pointe Galeote” translates from the Spanish as ‘point galley slave,’ the haunting “duenne” that is not territorial origin but colonial abduction and displacement as origin: “is not shell, is shackle!” (15). Violent invasion and abduction forms the Creole language itself.

In “Poets in Limbo” (1986), which reflects the preoccupation with identity politics in the 1980s, Claire Harris argues that the issue of authenticity for black women writing in Canada is a response to the negation of slavery. Focusing on the example of Trinidad, where she and Brand both come from, Harris writes:

. . . Trinidad . . . [was] colonized earlier and more deeply than any other part of the world. . . . A successful slave state requires people exiled from the authentic self. Thus laws aimed at the destruction of language and culture. Nation, cultural and family groupings were deliberately disbanded, their members scattered; African religions and ceremonies were banned and a reductive version of Christianity imposed. Dehumanization became an essential part of the daily life of the enslaved. New names were imposed, languages were banned, rape and murder

²Teresa Zackodnik discusses Brand’s evocation of the colonization of language by the legislation that “the official languages of the Caribbean be English, French, Dutch, and Spanish.” Such regulation represses a “choking aspirate” of “African languages . . . savagely and forcibly submerged . . . ‘Under the colonizer’s whip’ . . .” in *No Language Is Neutral* (196). Zackodnik argues that the historic repression of Caribbean national languages creates an underground subversion that is not outside the symbolic but a linguistic act that moves between the recognized inside and the repressed outside that changes the official languages (196-97).

became normal perks of ownership. (116)

The parallel national ‘origins’ of Brand and Harris leads Krishna Sarbadhikary to draw on Harris’s view of the struggle against destruction and dehumanization that engenders a quest for authenticity that “is Black and Female” in an article on Brand’s *Chronicles of the Hostile Sun* and *No Language Is Neutral*. Sarbadhikary writes, “In this search for representation of the authentic self an overriding concern for some has been a search for a language to encode their experiences, a search for authentic images, words and use of radically different forms to express the reality of their being” (118). But the concept of an ‘authentic’ image becomes impossible in the Caribbean focus of Brand’s works. In “Poets in Limbo” Harris not only comments on “people exiled from an authentic self” but also on Brand’s early problematization in *Chronicles of the Hostile Sun* (about the American invasion of Grenada) of any originary “wholeness in landscape” that might be authentic and outside colonialism, since “. . . the climate and fertility of these islands . . . made sugar-cane, and therefore slavery, profitable . . .” (118). In the postmodern novel that links to the invasion of Grenada, *In Another Place, Not Here*, Brand again inscribes the materiality of the body and landscape as both oppressive and sensual, but ‘authenticity’ is not the issue. ‘Authenticity’ only ties subjectivity to imperial colonization in a knowledge-language system of representation that reduces the heterogeneity of life to what is unspeakable in the categorical codes of Western language.

Desire, in Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here*, is not produced as a longing for the full presence of the subject in an originary past (a utopian pre-symbolic). As I argue in the previous sections on Marlatt’s and Brossard’s resistance to psychoanalytic theory,

desire is not produced in a division between an originary self of ‘authentic truth’ and the méconnaissance of language and social construction that produces a displaced and inadequate object in the present presence of language. In Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here*, desire is produced by the negation of any positivist foundation for knowledge. There is no originary body or subject (positivist essence) to clash with the symbolic displacement of language and create new symbolizations. Instead, Brand investigates the political colonization of subjects, desires, and thought itself through an imperialistic reterritorialization of the symbolic heterogeneity that abstract and deterritorialized flows of language produce. The evacuation of the originary subject means there is no essence outside language that pushes against linguistic repression and social regulation. Thus, the ‘originary’ subject becomes defined as an always already linguistic construct of an unspeakable heterogeneity and fluidity of sense. This enables Brand to shift the meaning of the proper ‘subject’ from an originary element that pushes against the commodification of the symbolic through a linguistic attempt to master the world by repressing certain bodies and concepts as unknowable. With the evacuation of the originary subject, Brand deconstructs the colonization of desire and opens a symbolic space for the inscription of an uncommodified “desiring writing.”

On the partial and heterogeneous surfaces of language, Brand investigates the holes of contra-diction and atomic instability that open categorical enclosures for an intense desiring production. An intersubjective connection between anti-capitalist revolution and struggles against racism, sexism, and homophobia inscribe an uncommodifiable, continuous movement toward “another place” that becomes a drift

between sign systems and systemic categories. With an intense, micrological energy, Verlia, Elizete, and the narrator of *In Another Place, Not Here* open insubstantial quantum spaces in the substantial molecular³ surfaces of such concept-metaphors as race, gender, class, and sexuality. This enables them to spin the insubstantial particles out of their original, categorical orbits of sense and form new, mobile, desiring connections that make uncommodifiable sense. Without the solidity and definition of a substance or an object, an uncommodifiable sense exits the phallogocentric economy of exchange that essentializes the violent displacement of a colonizing, objectifying language. Rather than relying on an ‘authenticity’ of image or language that implies substance, Brand decolonizes language and knowledge from Western binary thought in the insubstantial gap of “*délire*” that dialectically leaps on the points of connection between different partial inscriptions and partial elements. This enables her to deregulate categorical knowledge by opening a space of difference within the same in the mobile, deconstructive revolutionary energy of Verlia’s global political analysis and aerial leaping and Elizete’s territorial demotic, poetic language and earthy tunnelling. The similar anti-categorical drift within the differences of their strategies enables Brand to deconstruct such oppositional concepts as material/abstract, earth/sky, and territorial/deterritorial. This desiring production is not the effect of an objectifying *méconnaissance* that distances language from the ‘real’ subject. Instead, desire becomes a

³As I have noted previously, molecular elements are the smallest identifiable substances known. Quantum elements are not substances. Various quantum interactions create substances, but the particles themselves have no meaning outside of their interactions.

production of derailment and connection that changes the way of thinking about the real by creating new becomings that cannot be categorically separated and contained. Brand's investigation of the mobile space of intersubjectivity has no originary subject or essential truth that contests symbolic objectification. Instead, the shifting movements of a rhizomatic intersubject amid multiple separate and interconnected stories push the question of writing race, gender, and sexuality out of Modernist categories of identity and into a postmodernist flux and nonidentity that continues to resist the global commodification of late capitalist consumption.

Brand deploys an enabling absence and strategic forgetting that negates a Western psychoanalytic longing for a pre-Oedipal plenitude or essential foundation. In Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*, strategic absence enacts a philosophic Marxist negativity that connects with Derrida's insistence on the double displacement of metaphor that creates the effect of an origin in the continual displacement of language. In Brand's novel, the law-of-the-father is not the inscription of language that displaces the body but the inscription of the colonizer's language that creates the opposition of self/other. Adela's narrative of absence, murder, and suicide are inscribed by the desiring production of the master's language. But the absence of a proper subject in the colonizer's split between body and language enables Adela to evacuate both the subject and object positions of language and twist his intent to inscribe lines of escape. While her escape is haunted by the pain of death, forgetting, and refusal to name, Elizete's Marxist/deconstructive deployment of this absence speaks through a language that cannot be mastered regardless of intent because it has no original foundation. A becoming present of a black, lesbian,

between-women intersubjectivity in language emerges in the passionate energy with which Elizete embraces the absence of mastery in the narratives of Adela. On the surfaces of a heterogeneous language, Adela and the woman Elizete was given to (who ties up her womb to prevent reproduction) become the *fictions* that inscribe the difference of an ‘originary’ Caribbean mother who refuses the Western narrative of desire for a pre-Oedipal, maternal plenitude prior to the split between body (intent) and language. While Adela embodies a fictional origin to die for, a dream of freedom and escape as death, Elizete constructs Adela into a fiction to live by in the absence of origin rather than a deadly foundation. As Elizete says, “. . . I could not put my foot in that darkness when the time come though I envy Adela” (23). For Elizete, Adela’s absence becomes a fiction of flight that marks places of difference and a black, feminine, resisting presence that takes shape on the fictional surfaces of narratives with absent origins.

Although Brand deterritorializes adherence to any singular, political doxa, her sense of revolutionary change emerges from an anti-imperialist Caribbean engagement with Marxism. She acknowledges the early influence of Trinidadian communist and writer C.L.R. James on her literary and political thinking (*Bread Out of Stone* 93). In *Another Place, Not Here* draws on and challenges the Marxist theory of dialectical materialism. Brand’s fictional praxis multiplies the Marxist sense of a dialectical movement between abstract theory and material practice. The dialectic becomes a quantum energy that deregulates the molecular elements of a dialectical materialism through the dissolution of oppositional categories. A quantum and rhizomatic leaping replaces the dialectical movement of desire in the relationship between Elizete and Verlia.

In order to inscribe a space for “one love, one struggle,” Brand must first take apart the exclusionary categories that inscribe opposition. She leaps between territorial languages and bodies and deterritorialized abstractions and molecular bodies without organs to inscribe the contingently different meanings of the need to eradicate all oppression in the lives of two very different Caribbean Canadian lesbians that connect in a revolutionary fervour.

The delirious revolution that is the uncontainable meeting of a categorically derailed Marxism and feminism in Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here* comes through the rhizomatic intersubjectivity of multiple differences that meet and produce an explosive charge. A rhizomatic lesbian energy passionately haunts the same sites with difference in an attempt to create lines of escape from colonizing representation. By evacuating sense from categorical positions and writing without a mastering subject, Brand opens a space without the violence of self/other positioning for a lesbian erotics of revolutionary connection between Verlia’s Marxist narrative and Elizete’s feminist narrative. She steals the surplus energy of sugar back from capitalist gain, accumulation, and definition and writes it as the surplus of “délire”/delirious undoing that produces the “grace” of atomic connection between the lesbian bodies that produce it.

This delirious, lesbian undoing is particular to *In Another Place, Not Here* and some of her poetic works. In *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, Brand’s diverse male and female characters do not necessarily inscribe desire in a lesbian erotics. In response to my question at the launch of *At the Full and Change of the Moon* (14 April 1999) about whether she would resent being included in a study on postmodern lesbian writing in

Canada and Québec because of the potential for the elision of differences, Brand said, not necessarily, but she does not want to be ghettoized as a lesbian writer or a black writer. Yet, in her interview with Frank Birbalsingh, which was around the time that Brand was writing *In Another Place, Not Here*, she said that she wanted to focus more on “lesbian sexuality” (135). Further, in *Bread Out of Stone*, she writes, “For me the most radical strategy of the female body for itself is the lesbian body confessing all the desire and fascination for itself” (46). *At the Full and Change of the Moon* includes a lesbian desiring intensity in the language that inscribes Marie Ursele, Bola, and Cordelia, who opens to “A Sudden and Big Lust.” However, the novel is neither so revolutionary nor lesbian as *In Another Place, Not Here*.

Chapter 11. Originary Negation: Marxism, Feminism, and Deconstruction

The difference between the Western desire for the other as the foundation for the production of knowledge and the imposition of such a desire on another culture opens the space for Brand to examine the colonization of desire and knowledge as a political act of control rather than as the necessary truth of depth psychology. By inscribing Adela as Elizete's originary mother, Brand locates origin as the point of abduction into slavery rather than a utopian blissful unity or an African culture outside Western systems of knowledge. Adela's resistance to the colonizer's inscription comes not from a positivist sense of a violated, pre-existent identity but from appropriating the multiple splits of colonial desire and returning the colonizer's gaze of a deadly desire for and hatred of the other back on himself. Adela's murder, by spitting his own words back at him, and her suicide enact a negation of her originary presence (as self or other) as well as a negation of the present displacement that only inscribes pain and separation. Contrary to the psychoanalytic concept of motherhood as phallic fulfilment that breaches the gap between originary need and displacement in representation, Adela creates a genealogy of desiring abortion and a negative philosophy that relies on no originary presence but on the negation of an already inscribed negation through slavery. According to C.L.R. James, this negation of negation is one of the principle tenants of Marxist dialectical materialism (*C.L.R. James Reader* 161).

Elizete translates Adela's originary negation of the subject that annihilates the mastery of the object into linguistic lines of flight from patriarchal and Eurocentric colonizations of language and subjectivity. The narrator also translates Adela's abortive

genealogy into an intersubjective space between “I” and “I,” “you,” and “she” that has no originating subject or organized object but interacts with the contradictions of linguistic surfaces that make organization through language impossible. The absence of an organized subject (as object) in language enables Elizete to twist Adela’s closure into a narrative opening that appropriates the partial inscriptions of a heterogeneous language without fidelity to their systemic contexts. In her abandoned and abandoning linguistic straying, partial elements break out of their colonized nuclear orbits and spin into new orbits that enable connections with the struggles of Adela, the woman Elizete was given to, Verlia, and Abena. Becoming deconstructive-Marxist “wood lice,” Elizete tunnels into the enabling “grace” of negation. Since nothing is lost or castrated, this absence is not abjection but a joyous act of creation. What Brossard calls “délire” becomes “grace” for Brand as Elizete deliriously reads the holes that open in the solidity of objectified surfaces and reveal a ghostly, uncommodifiable becoming present between the narrative lines inscribed and twisted on the bodies of other women.

Adela’s negation of origin, authenticity, and presence in Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here* inscribes what Gayatri Spivak identifies as the difference between the colonial desire for the other and the demand that the colonized be and desire the other. The displacement of the European desire for the other marks the point of managing a crisis of hybridity and becomes a double displacement in the non-West’s longing for the West (the other) that longs for the non-West. While Marlatt’s lesbian haunting of hybridity enacts an anti-racist deconstruction of whiteness, the colonial demand to desire the other in Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here* locates hybridity as a seductive

colonization of the black self (marked as other) by the other (marked as self) in Hegelian appropriation. Spivak argues the double displacement of self and other in a hybrid colonial desire reveals that “the so-called non-West’s turn toward the West is a *command*. That turn was not in order to fulfil some longing to consolidate a pure space for ourselves, that turn was a command” (*Post-Colonial Critic* 8).

The “desiring writing” of Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand moves toward uncommodifiable sense that resists the binary self/other of the proper subject that is displaced as unspeakable in language. Yet the differences of manner in their nonrepresentational writing in part inscribes the difference between desire and demand. The origin that negates the binary split in Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here* is not attraction to something else but abduction. Brand writes:

And the woman with the bucket, well at the heart there was no bucket, and no woman either. They had not come here willingly looking for food or water or liking the way the place set off against the sky or even for hunger. They had not come because the hunting was good or the ground moist for planting. They had not come moving into the forest just after the rainy season. They had not come because they saw great cities foreshadowed in the horizon or rum shops sprawling with their dancing and laughter. Not because a shape overtook them in geometry or because after observing speeding clouds they coveted a new landfall. They had been taken. Plain. Hard. Rough. Swept up from thinking of the corn to be shucked, the rains coming or no rain coming at all. . . . Poised over a well, the bag lowered, they had been plucked, or, caught in the misfortune of a wedding or a

war, sold. (*In Another Place* 41)

Like the work of Marlatt and Brossard, Brand's "desiring writing" moves with the uncontainable speed of quantum *différance*. The meaning of "well," for example, multiplies as the grammatical lines of force become indistinguishable from the constituent elements. The word "well" is a representational adverb and substantive (noun) of health and depth, a womb-like hole or a fluid source of life, but it is also an interjection with affective but no substantial meaning. While these effects of Brand's "desiring writing" are similar to those of Marlatt and Brossard, Brand resists their emphasis on corporeality in writing at least until it can be decoded. Rather than haunting the transgressive lines of connection between bodies and languages,¹ a ghostly colonial abduction, imposition, and separation continues to haunt the idea of the body as other. By initially retaining the split and then evacuating the subject with negation, Brand can murder the god-father of speech, return his phallogocentric gaze on himself, and reveal that the 'truth' at the "heart" of the matter is the colonizing abduction of capitalist slavery that develops the concept of origin.

In Brand's writing, the law-of-the-father is not an essential sublimation of body,

¹Both Marlatt and Brossard critique the violence of self/other oppositions and rewrite the relationship between body and language so that the separation of otherness changes to points that connect differences. Thus corporeal and linguistic bodies can intertwine and change without eradicating each other. Brand's focus on the difference between the desire for the other and the command to be the other continues to raise the issue of the self/other split in a focus on colonization as the point of violent originary invasion. Because the self is absent and the other is self (the non-West's longing for the West [other] that longs for the non-West), the places of self/other contact inscribe a deadly space of an ambiguous desiring death that can either lead to quietude or revolutionary change depending on the agency of the intersubject.

maternal nurturance, or originary truth but the political imposition of the colonizer's language, literature, knowledge, politics, and economic rule. Drawing on Lillian Allen's discussion of the revolutionary potential in the "anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and anti-sexist" vision of black women's writing in Canada,² Barbara Godard argues that "Allen inverts here the usual hierarchy of feminist resistance by locating the colonialist-racist question as the primary form of oppression from which all others derive" ("Writing Resistance" 108). This directly ties the sexism imbedded in phallogocentrism with the racism of imperialist capitalism but reveals a difference that focuses on political rather than essential Western psychoanalytic concepts. In "Unredeemed Grace," Brand comments on the political regulation enforced by an education in the English classics that creates a linguistic and representational absence:

I . . . became aware of the perniciousness in being educated out of yourself and how deliberate that was. . . . [T]he 'classics' were not taught merely for the sake of literature but for the purpose of colonizing. . . . Those works never 'contained' me. . . . I felt myself or 'us' as an absence in that work. . . . (8)

While Brand says she loved the English canon because she "loved language . . . [and] how things sounded," she cites a different, material joy in reading the vernacular of Samuel Selvon (8). For Brand, absence is inscribed not by an essential division of maternal body/phallogocentric language but by the Western English canon and the

²The quotation from Lillian Allen comes from her presentation at the Women and Words Conference in Vancouver, "A Writing of Resistance: Black Women's Writing in Canada." Allen's contribution is printed in the proceedings, *In the Feminine: Women and Words / Les femmes et les mots* (Dybikowski et al.).

discourse of Western philosophy that produces such splitting between self and other.

The joy of presence in the sound and grammar of Elizete's demotic Caribbean language³ does not address the body/language split of sense — that Marlatt and Brossard thoroughly problematize — as much as a different philosophy that presumes language enacts a collaborative creation between people. In the interactive and performative storytelling tradition that Brand deploys in some of her stories in *Sans Souci and Other Stories*, Kathleen J. Renk argues, "Boundaries of 'western' reality do not exist in this world, where the living and dead, the conscious and unconscious meet. . . ." Julia Kristeva's idea of the semiotic *chora* that wells through the sound and rhythm of a 'feminine' language that can never be represented in the phallic symbolic becomes less

³While the demotic languages of Trinidad or Grenada (to name only the two nations that are most relevant to the Caribbean locations of *In Another Place, Not Here*) have particular conventions of grammar, pronunciation and various local contaminations between English, French, Spanish, and West African languages, a 'demotic Caribbean' language as such is impossible since it crosses the differences between national languages. Yet Brand discusses the creation of such a deterritorialized yet particular language for Verlia in Toronto as she learns to speak across the differences. The locations of *In Another Place, Not Here* also transgress national borders, leaping between Grenada, Trinidad, and St. Vincent in a deterritorialized Caribbean specificity. Due to such transgression in Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* and Brand's personal connection with the transgressions of national specificity within the alliances of various black communities and organizations in Toronto, I refer to a 'Caribbean demotic.' A literary 'demotic' language, even if not deterritorialized in this manner, cannot create an *authentic* speech or function with representational transparency. Speaking of the demotic that West Indians speak in the London of Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, J. Edward Chamberlin insists, ". . . the language is not quite like anything anyone has ever heard before, except in this novel." Like Brand's novel, the language moves "between lyrical and narrative, the artifice of literature and the naturalness of speech," and thus "discloses the arbitrariness of these categories" (92). Any literary or poetic language differs from the quotidian. Thus, any idea of realism or *authenticity* within a demotic literary language is already cut through by the difference of a language that has to be more *authentic* than the daily reality of national language itself.

relevant as a focal point. Renk argues, “Story itself makes the granddaughters merge with the grandmother in a way that goes beyond the notions of the semiotic, of the mother . . . (108). Gayatri Spivak’s comment that she is so “repelled by Kristeva’s politics” that she “can’t read her seriously anymore” speaks to Brand’s decolonizing resistance to the conscious/unconscious split self of Western psychoanalysis. Spivak argues that Kristeva’s narrative of “women’s time” relies on a “Christianizing psychoanalysis” that enacts a “ferocious Western Europeanism” and a “implicit sort of positivism: naturalizing of the *chora*, naturalizing of the pre-semiotic, etcetera” (*Outside* 17). A between-women intersubjectivity in Brand’s writing includes but is much more than an unrepressed and disorganized corporeal connection.

Both Verlia and Elizete want to escape the body that has been so heavily scarred and coded by racism, sexism, and capitalism. They want to be rid of the body that ties them to animality and enables the appropriation and oppression of imperialist objectification and commodification. Verlia thinks, “She’d like to live, exist or be herself in some other place, less confining, less pinned down, less tortuous, less fleshy to tell the truth” (127). Elizete thinks, “Heavy as Hell. Her body. She doesn’t want a sense of it while she’s living on the street” (54). Although Brand does investigate a lesbian, corporeal erotics in which surfaces touch without psychoanalytic and imperialist coded depth, the body as a categorical substance is negated and not a materiality that enables flight.⁴ Such negation of a substantial, originary body inscribes flight from a Western

⁴I will discuss the dialectical materiality of the body in greater detail in chapter 12, “Quantum Energy in Molecular Dialectics.” Here, I focus on the material coding of the

theoretical imperialism that inscribes a heavy material coding onto the non-subject with no super-ego for moral repression. As Franz Fanon argues, the displacement of the psychoanalytic split subject onto black bodies characterizes the reterritorialization of abstraction through the white gaze of colonization.⁵ To inscribe flight from the repression of racial difference as the imaginary ‘other’ of the unspeakable body, Brand emphasizes the politics of a deterritorializing resistance through uncontainable abstraction, negation, and absence.⁶ Lynette Hunter argues in *Outsider Notes* that the maintenance of the Lacanian symbolic as “the possible” is “the ideal strategy for the power abuses of western state nationalism/doublethink: you accept that there is an ‘other’ and simultaneously repress it; you remember to forget the other” (129) and relegate the disempowered to “the unconscious, the body, the private . . . the ‘natural,’ the ‘intuitive,’ the ‘primitive,’ the

black body to show the difference between the strategies of creating a language beyond phallogocentric lack in the writing of Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand. This difference of focus pivots on the issue of (neo-)colonization and a history of slavery. The difference between the desire for the other and the demand to desire the other emerges from the Western/nonWestern difference in their writings.

⁵In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon writes: “We can now stake out a marker. For the majority of white men the Negro represents the sexual instinct (in its raw state). The Negro is the incarnation of a genital potency beyond all moralities and prohibitions” (177).

⁶This emphasis on writing away from what has been constructed as the unspeakable body is similar to my arguments for Marlatt and Brossard, who bring bodies into language by writing a noncategorical corporeality that meets with the heterogeneity and insubstantiality of language. Quantum energies and attractions include corporeal and abstract thought as a productive connection in language rather than binary opposition. In the binary opposition of the *chora* and the *thetic*, abstraction can be reduced to the way the heterogeneous body is unspeakable since it is displaced by the organization of language.

‘not-civilized,’ the not-articulated” (133). Rather than focusing on an irrepressible corporeality of the *chora* that can inscribe difference in a lesbian desiring language, Brand emphasizes the imperialist reterritorialization of the abstract by naming it a natural, nonlinguistic body that can repress and contain black and female intersubjects as unspeakable corporeality itself.

As Deleuze and Guattari argue in *Kafka: Toward a Minority Literature*, the dissemination and multiplication of the Oedipal triangle into issues of race exposes the absurdity of lack as an essential principle of gender, language, desire, and subjectivity. In a mimesis of anti-colonial difference within the colonizer’s terms, Brand dismisses the Oedipal separation that produces a nostalgic longing for pre-Oedipal unity with the maternal body by writing the ‘origin’ of a black Caribbean subject into the ‘original’ maternal abduction of slavery, which is nothing to long for. As Susan Gingell writes, for Brand, the return to her original homeland “is to encounter . . . the physical and psychological poverty that are the legacy of imperialism” (33). Not only is the philosophic concept of ‘origin’ already invaded by Western politics but the psychoanalytic concept of nostalgia also dismisses the real as unknowable. In his analysis of Caribbean writing, J. Edward Chamberlin cautions, “. . . [T]he immediacy of suffering . . . can turn indulgent, with revolution slipping into romance and the melodrama of fantasy and nostalgia.” Nostalgia, for Chamberlin, raises the “danger of not being credible at all” (218). In an interview with Frank Birbalsingh, Brand says,

I wasn’t as nostalgic, I think, as some of them [older writers like Sam Selvon,

V.S. Naipaul, George Lamming], might have been.⁷ . . . I didn't long for home at all. I longed for a past, a kind of validation of my history, which I thought I could find in a past that was beyond my grandparents . . . somewhere in the consciousness of a people that had to do with slavery, that other exile. . . . (122)

Nostalgia, even memory of origin, returns not to the idea of a paradisaal blissful unity but to pain and separation as Adela reveals in Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*: ". . . [E]very different place they put her she take an opportunity to remember all the things that she was going to forget. For Adela was remembering that and long before that, back to the ship" (21). Because origin is the place of Adela's enslavement, neither Elizete nor Adela are taken by nostalgic longing for origin but long for the place of forgetting that wipes out original memory.

Teresa Zackodnik argues that in Brand's writing "Nostalgia is written as escapism" (208). Zackodnik reads an ambivalence in Brand's *No Language Is Neutral* between a desire for "a homeland and a corresponding search for an untainted language in which to articulate black experience" and a suspicion of both "nostalgia and . . . hope for . . . a neutral language." Zackodnik argues this tension creates "a notion of the exiled self as place and belonging" in "a multivoiced discourse of standard English and

⁷Susan Gingell astutely points to Brand's use of Derek Walcott's line, "no language is neutral," as the title of her poem and volume of poetry. Gingell analyses the elliptical return of difference in Brand's resistant reading of Walcott's nostalgic glorification of the colonial empire in the story from *Sans Souci* and the poem from *Fore Day Morning*, both entitled "St. Mary's Estate." Unlike Walcott's loving "bowing and scraping" (Gingell 48), Gingell argues that in Brand's story and poem the return to origin in the Caribbean becomes a raging return to "a landscape and a psyche that bear the deforming traces of slave and neo-colonial societies" (46).

Caribbean nation language” (194). *In Another Place, Not Here* jettisons any sense of nostalgia as anything but a deferral of life and the struggle for political change:

. . . the women braced and girdled to hold in their regular sway, to saving the sweetness collecting in their hips for some other time . . . saving so that they can live some other place. All this thinking of another place. Well she was there and doesn’t want to go back. Give her the day-to-day hardness, real and here. She didn’t want to be anywhere but now, nowhere but the what to do about. (183)

While “here” is never a satisfactory place for Verlia who makes quantum leaps between territorial and deterritorialized geographical, racial, sexual, and theoretical places and spaces that inscribe her shifting contextual relations, her mobile desiring politics do not evoke exile.⁸ She does not long for the place that she left with all the oppressive conditions she cannot forget.

Verlia’s desiring politics is a compelling movement that does not settle, belong, or make proper lines of connection anywhere. Gingell writes of *No Language Is Neutral*:

When neither the place of origin, Trinidad, nor the adopted place, Toronto, at least

⁸In an article arguing for the legitimacy of a West Indian Canadian tradition of resistance writing that should be given critical attention, Monika Kaup argues that the “bilingual continuum of the idioms,” particularly in the writing of Austin Clarke and Dionne Brand, shows that “West Indian Caribbean writing has developed from a literature of exile and expatriation into an immigrant literature” (174). However, Brand writes neither a literature of “exile” nor “immigration.” Brand insists she is not an “immigrant” writer (personal interview with Quigley, 14 April 1999). The word *immigrant* implies consent with and assimilation into the dominant culture of the new place, as William Boelhower argues in “The Making of Ethnic Autobiography.” Brand’s movement between standard English and a Caribbean demotic implies the resistance, dissent, and the impossibility of assimilation that Kaup acknowledges but simultaneously erases with the word *immigrant*.

as they are presently constituted, are places in which she can be at home, the only option that remains is to construct a place in which she could live at peace: “In another place, not here, a woman might touch something between beauty and nowhere, back there and here.” The final section of [the title poem] “no language is neutral” begins with a vision, the construction of a feminist utopia that is conscious of women as constituted by history, race, and class, among other things. . . . (51)

Picking up and developing the line from “no language is neutral” into this novel, Brand continues the construction of another place where black women could love each other by leaping between the partial places and positions of *In Another Place, Not Here*. Yet the desire to build a feminist utopia is always undercut with impossibility. Not only is the dialectical crossing of any representation or position into its opposite unresolvable in Brand’s novel but the quantum energy that infuses the dialectical movement also functions to deterritorialize categorical positionality itself (as I argue in “Quantum Energy in Molecular Dialectics”). In “Crossings,” Coomi S. Vevaina and Barbara Godard draw on Deleuze and Guattari’s theory that “A minor literature is marked by impossibility, ‘the impossibility of *not* writing, because national consciousness, uncertain or oppressed, necessarily exists by means of literature,’ the impossibility of writing *in* the [major] ‘national’ language, because of the irreducible distance from it” (Deleuze and Guattari qtd.; Vevaina and Godard 13-14). Godard and Vevaina argue that this impossibility produces a “dis-location or dis-junction of signification” that holds revolutionary potential in the “movement towards something hitherto unknown, a

wrenching novelty” (13-14). Brand enacts a similar dislocation in relation to the impossibility of located position that is impossible not to speak in order to challenge existing oppression and impossible to speak because of the distance from any singular location. This sense of “wrenching novelty” in the disjunctive place between impossibilities develops a revolutionary politics that pushes toward betterment on catachrestic foundations that undercut utopian nostalgia, exclusionary closure, and sedimented representation.

Crossing lines between positions, Brand enacts a Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial deconstruction that strategically deploys negation to open rhizomatic spaces for revolutionary production. Political negotiation based on catachrestic foundations connects Marxist dialectics with deconstruction without abandoning a revolutionary struggle for change. While Derrida argues there is no positivist concept outside the inscription of language that creates the effect of an originary concept, Marx argues there is no positivist sense of freedom outside its negative inscription by oppression that creates the desire not to be oppressed. The greater the oppression, Marx argues, the greater will be the push toward revolution. The idea of an originary presence that is negated by language or political oppression can only lead to a memory of pain that concludes a subject is produced by a violent split from an original presence. In Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here*, the ‘originary’ mother is Adela: the mother whose speaking, textual body negates slavery through absence and suicide. Adela’s negation does not rely on an originary presence but on absence, suicide, and the catachrestic impossibility of a positivist, originary subject or concept. Her negation, however, enacts a Marxist

dialectics of contradiction. C.L.R. James⁹ writes, “For Marxists, the fundamental logical law is the contradictory nature of all phenomenon and first of all human society . . .” (*C.L.R. James Reader* 155). In Marxist theory, Adela’s negation (suicide) contradicts another negation (slavery). Neither Adela’s response of suicide nor her enslavement are positive concepts or actions of subjects outside of inscription.

This Marxist theory of the dialectical negation of negation relies on no originary positivity, yet it is not nihilism.¹⁰ Instead, the catachrestic foundation of negation in Marxism connects with an affirmative deconstruction by creating new positions without

⁹I use C.L.R. James’s reading of Marxist dialectics because Brand notes his early influence on her political thinking and sense of literary heritage (*Bread Out of Stone* 93) and refers to him intertextually in Verlia’s reading of his “*Dialectics and History*” (*In Another Place* 209). The passage I quote from James’s “Dialectical Materialism and the Fate of Humanity” was reprinted, Anna Grimshaw notes in her bibliography, as *Dialectic and History: An Introduction* (*C.L.R. James Reader* 432-33).

¹⁰In *Bread Out of Stone*, Brand discusses nihilism as self-hate generated from the internalized racism of the white gaze:

In the nihilism spawned in young Black people today in America, in the deep self-hatred that is their piece of the American pie, in the degradation fed to them like bread, and in her most self-annihilating moment, Patsy Jones nicknamed her young and innocent self ‘Gangster Bitch,’ perhaps because she needed a fearsome name to beat the fearsome street that she knew was gonna get her somehow, some way, any way and . . . all but just repeated what she’d understood as the designated ideological form of femininity for Black women on this continent. . . . (126)

Although Donna Baily Nurse quotes George Elliott Clarke’s statement of the “justified” “nihilistic tendency” of *In Another Place, Not Here* (C1), Brand emphasizes the difference between the affirmative negation of negation that Abena, Elizete, and Verlia enact in *In Another Place, Not Here* and the annihilation of love and struggle for political change in a nihilism with no cause (even if catachrestic). In “Brandishing a Powerful Pen,” Brand emphasizes the ability to work toward revolutionary change through negation: “Because nihilism is such closure, I think it is precisely the point at which one sees the possibility of regenerating a revolutionary vision . . .” (16).

original substances. After witnessing the hatred against blacks and Jews at a KKK rally and the contradiction of a woman who is oppressed by gender and who oppresses on the basis of race and culture, Verlia draws on Michel Foucault's Marxist concept of deregulated production that emerges from the disciplinary mechanisms of power and thinks, "Everything exists in the same time. If oppression exists . . . then freedom exists, the moment you see oppression you also see freedom so no one is ignorant or innocent" (175). The evocation of potential freedom emerges as the struggle against racism, ethnocentrism, and sexism. The revolutionary potential to create something new by negating negation is part of Marxist dialectics. James writes:

The Stalinist state, the Nazi state, and in their varying degrees all states today, based upon property and privilege, are the negation of the complete democracy of the people. It is this state which has to be destroyed, that is to say, it is this state which is to be negated by the proletarian revolution. Thus, the inevitability of socialism is the inevitability of the negation of negation, the third and most important law of the dialectic. (*C.L.R. James Reader* 161)

Brand and James propose a negative philosophy in which the linguistic performance and laws contradict themselves and enable a glimpse of "another place, not here."

On the negative foundations that produce a Derridean effect of origin and a Marxist effect of freedom, a revolutionary postcolonial struggle against imperialism joins Brand's rhizomatic affirmative deconstruction. As Spivak argues, the political focus of decolonization on "nationhood, constitutionality, citizenship, democracy, even culturalism" relies on concepts "coded within the legacy of imperialism" and thus have

“no historically adequate referent. . . . These claims of founding catachresis . . . make postcoloniality a deconstructive case” (*Outside* 60). The devastation in both Verlia’s return to the Caribbean and Elizete’s travel to Canada enact the impossibility of an improvement narrative at the same time as the impossibility of not writing towards such. The revolutionary potential within these contradictory narratives relies on a catachrestic nominalism¹¹ that opens quantum spaces for contingent and mutable lines of connection that would be impossible in sedimented, originary concept-metaphors.

Adela’s suicidal and murderous removal of presence enacts a negation of negation that displaces both the idea of a positivist, originary referent for her presence as a subject prior to colonization and the violence of the abduction that negates her as a subject and makes her an object of slavery. This returns as the effect of presence in a resisting subject:

She [the woman Elizete was given to] say when she great-great-great-ma come here she was grieving bad for where she come from. And when she done calculate the heart of this place, that it could not yield to her grief, she decide that this place was not nowhere and is so she call it. Nowhere. She say nothing here have no name. She never name none of her children, nor the man she had was to sleep with and she never answer to the name that they give she which was Adela. After all that they say she kill the man that buy she and keep she in that place, for she look him full in his face until he dead. . . . They say she could work good obeah

¹¹I will expand on Brand’s catachrestic nominalism in the next two chapters.

but she say is not obeah what kill him, is his own wicked mind what make him die
in his wicked name. She had spit all his evil into that circle and he could not resist
himself. (18)

Deploying the Hegelian self/other division in which mastery is inscribed as a violence of linguistic separation that absents the presence of the original father/subject of speech (phallogos), Adela murders him by deflecting his absent words back at himself. As Derrida argues, the cure and poison of language as the *pharmakon* displaces the fullness of knowledge learned by heart. In the original subject/father's absence, the speaking subject becomes an "orphan." Without this linguistic orphan's desire for the father's attending presence in logos, the *pharmakon* becomes "a desire for orphanhood and patricidal subversion . . . a criminal thing, a poisoned presence" (*Dissemination* 77). Orphaned Adela "calculate[s]" and uses the *pharmakon* to eradicate the subject/father who only oppresses her. She negates any positive originary subject/concept by her suicide and returns the displacement of the subject into a colonized object as the property of the colonizer. Responding to the difference of the command to be rather than desire the other, she mimetically takes on the Western self/other split of his speaking subject and voids him of the exclusive power to create the displaced originary idea (the superiority of the white subject) by naming his desired object (the inferiority of the black object).¹² Because

¹²Diana Brydon discusses Brand's ability, in the poem "Spiritual Blues for Mammy Prater" in *No Language Is Neutral*, to evoke the gaze of "the first-person speaking subject of agency, rather than inscribing her as the object of gaze or inscription" (84). Further, Brydon insists, ". . . although slavery existed, it does not follow that slavery produced slaves. . . . their self-definition as human beings produces a paradox for the slaveholders but not for themselves" (85).

origin returns her to the place of absence and abduction, she is without a bucket to dip into (the) “well”(ness) (see above, Brand 41) of a curing *pharmakon* of language that stands in for the holes of memory. Instead, she takes on his language and his desire for the annihilation of the other as subject (her), returns his gaze back on himself (as the other subject) because she is absent, and murders him by granting his desire for annihilation through the other subject’s death.

Adela enacts what Homi Bhabha calls the death-gaze of the Medusa, negating the present and presence that negates her as a human subject, by negating herself as the origin of his meaning, becoming a sign “anterior to any *site* of meaning . . . [that] makes all cultural languages ‘foreign’ to themselves” (Bhabha 164), and returning his murderous colonial gaze on himself. This is not, contrary to Sarbadhikary’s argument, the feminist fascination with “the pre-Oedipal state of mother identification” (121). There is no gaze, language, or perspective in the prelinguistic or pre-Oedipal stage.¹³ Instead, Brand enacts the siege of language itself in the present performance that becomes foreign to itself and enacts a catachrestic gaze from within the named, symbolic absence.

Bhabha describes a resistance of the type that Adela enacts as the “*anti-dialectical*

¹³Sarbadhikary discusses the pre-Oedipal absence of distinct subjects and objects in *No Language Is Neutral*. While the passage she cites maintains a sense of an originary compulsion that becomes impossible in Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here*, that originary presence has a gaze that negates the commodifying gaze of compulsory heterosexuality. This is not a pre-Oedipal absence of gaze:

Old woman, that was the fragment I caught in
your eye, that was the look I fell in love with, the piece
of you that you kept, the piece of you left, the lesbian,
the inviolable. . . . (50)

movement of the subaltern instance [that] subverts any binary or sublatory ordering of power and sign” (55). Adela’s action is anti-dialectical in that she posits no originary pre-colonial knowledge or meaning outside the colonizer’s gaze, yet she resists the proper meaning of his naming, his sublation of her as objectified other by deploying the resistant absence of the evil eye, which, Bhabha writes,

defers the object of the look . . . and endows it with a strategic motion, which we may . . . name the movement of death drive. The evil eye, which is nothing in itself, exists in its lethal traces or effects as a form of iteration that arrests time — death/chaos — and initiates a space of *intercutting* that articulates politics/psyche, sexuality/race. It does this in a relation that is differential and strategic rather than originary, ambivalent rather than accumulative, doubling rather than dialectical . . . dealing death, extinguishing both presence and the present. (55-56)

Adela extinguishes her presence as a speaking subject in the present by refusing to name, refusing to live. In psychoanalytic terms, she resists the split between the subject and the object that occurs as the sublation of the death drive into language. Yet that does not produce an originary subject. She strategically mimics the colonizer’s desire, which unnames her humanity and unnames his naming of her by inscribing her death as the contradictory fulfilment of his desire. Because her death and absence are counter to the slave master’s desire for productivity and capital gain, she annihilates his economic and cultural capital.

In Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here*, the woman Elizete was given to and, at times, Elizete become the absent, suicidal, abducted foremother named Adela. This

mother-daughter relation negates any psychoanalytic idea of the child as a phallic gift of fulfilment and reveals the child as an obligation that has nothing to do with biology or desire and everything to do with the lack of adequate capital to provide for oneself or others in a neo-colonial system of exploitation: “She is a stray child left here because the woman has breasts that look like money and her hands grow fat yams and dasheen” (38). The woman Elizete was given to does not desire a child. Elizete is imposed on her. Before taking the child in, the woman who has “Tied up her womb in brackish water” (31) to ensure she has no children protests: “‘Nobody have no mother nobody have no father . . . I was the end of her line so they better not bring no more child for me’” (37). The gendered, Oedipal law-of-the-father makes no inherent sense in this world where Verlia’s uncle has no name, no propriety, and where Adela is given a name by her master to which she does not answer.¹⁴ The woman Elizete was given to is unnamed as this phrase that (dis)identifies her from the name “Mirelda Josefena,” which she mentions once but may merely be a slip of the tongue from the following reference to “Mal jo” (35), the evil eye of a Spanish ‘mal de ojo’ inscribed by colonization. Elizete’s mother who cannot provide, or who perhaps simply “forgot her there” (38), and the woman Elizete was given to who becomes Adela form no basis for the Oedipal process of identification, self-distinction, or belonging: “Here, there was no belonging that was singular, no need to store up lineage or count it. . . . No belonging squared off by a fence.

¹⁴Elizete echoes this when she is in Toronto and does not recognize the name her employer calls her. She is named “Gloria” by the law-of-the-father, the green card she has stolen in order to survive within the system.

a post, or a gate” (38). Not only is belonging equivalent to ownership by the master, but family lines also become impossible to draw in a society where children are encouraged to leave for education and material gain. To ensure the success of a slave-based economy, Claire Harris writes, familial groupings were divided to eradicate any cultural continuity (116). As material possessions, families were also torn apart when a plantation’s goods were divided among the sons as inheritance.¹⁵ Instead Adela and the woman Elizete was given to (by no one) because her mother forgot her under a samaan tree negate motherhood as an Oedipal desire for completion and form a mothering model of negative philosophy, unnamings, desiring abortion, decoding, displacement, and mutation: “Adela had to make her mind empty to conceive it” (20). A mothering of *desiring abortion* enacts the double negation that creates a ghostly beginning of presence, a drift that moves from the negation with no positivist presence into something else. As Chamberlin writes, Brand “sustains and extends the heritage of dispossession, resistance, and recovery” and creates difference (266). Adela’s mutation of children comes from unsuccessful abortions:

She spill and spill so and she mothered not a one. She only see their face as bad luck and grudge them the milk from her breast. She eat paw-paw seed until it make them sick in she womb. The charm she tried to use against each one was left half done in them so, till all of she generations have a way so that nothing is right

¹⁵C.L.R. James notes that plantation workers might poison all the younger children of the master to avoid such division of themselves as enslaved property (*The Black Jacobins* 16).

with them neither. (19)¹⁶

Elizete's 'inheritance' is that "... there is names for things" but she does not know them and "can not be sure of the truth of them." While the literal material conditions of children with "Bad mind and goat mouth" and afflictions like insomnia remain a strong criticism of the inheritance of imperialism (19), the poetic language derails into metaphoric connections with the deformation of the master's tongue and an inheritance of a deforming negation that enables Elizete to begin to utter poetic names from a place of absence: "Nothing barren here, Adela, in my eyes everything full of fullness, everything yielding. . . . Adela, the samaan was my mother. She spread and wave and grow thicker. Is you I must thank for that. Where you see nowhere I must see everything. . . . Now I calculating" (24). The potential for everything opens in the murderous agency of a *pharmakon* that embraces absence and the impossibility of unified concepts in a reality in

¹⁶Note the difference between the grudging of milk in this passage and Hélène Cixous's investigation of writing with white ink, the milk of *une écriture féminine*. Note also the similarity between a metaphorical originary mother of negation, who refuses motherhood and deforms (re)production, and the phrase "I have killed the womb and I am writing it" that governs Nicole Brossard's investigation in *L'amèr* of the potential to create new sense in a nonrepresentational language. The metaphorical connection of the meaningless womb of motherhood with the materials of language generates a metaphorical resistance to the return of the self-same imperialist and patriarchal values as linguistic reproduction and copy. Without nostalgic desire for the absent father of phallogocentrism (the absent referent), the materials of language make nonreproductive sense in the writing of Brand and Brossard and enact a patricide that decolonizes languages and bodies. Rather than Brossard's eradication of the maternal container that enables the return of the self-same, reproductive sense, Brand's use of a desiring abortion implies a deformation from within the system that changes the meaningless absence of a womb defined by the seminal meaning of colonization into the potential for feminine corporeal change. Desiring abortion simultaneously acknowledges the impossibility of an apocalyptic resolution to revolutionary struggle and the continual production of bodies that cannot be assimilated by capitalist productivity.

which a tree is a mother.

Verlia's leaping in the swirling past-present narrative tense of the novel also negates the ability of the American colonizers/invasers of Grenada to contain the black subject, to define democracy through American capitalist interests, and to negate the agency of difference that does not rely on identity, identification, or an originary subject:

She is laughing and laughing and laughing. . . . She's flying out to sea . . . going some place so old there's no memory. . . . She's leaping. She's tasting her own tears and she is weightless and deadly. She feels nothing except the bubble of a laugh each time she breathes. Her body is cool, cool in the air. Her body has fallen away, is just a line, an electric current. . . . She's in some other place already, less tortuous, less fleshy. (246-47)

In a revolutionary quantum becoming that has no subject or originary memory, Verlia's affective energy leaps into the absence that resists the (neo)colonizer's gaze, resists the dominant subject's gaze. Her leaping echoes the historic leap of Carib subjects off the cliff at Sauteurs on the north shore of Grenada to avoid colonization by the French in 1651. Her suicide to escape slaughter by invasion echoes the resistance of slaves who attack the master by killing themselves as the objects of his enunciation and depleting his capital accumulation.¹⁷ It also echoes Adela's strategy of "délire": a wandering off into

¹⁷This strategy of resistant suicide is not just specific to various invasions of Grenada. In *The Black Jacobins*, James cites self-decimation and the catachrestic appropriation of the revolutionary French values of liberty or death as part of the powerful resistance to slavery in what is now Haiti (16). Brand repeats this negative strategy of resistance in Marie Ursele, in *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, who organizes a mass poisoning among the plantation slaves.

absence. These echoes of the past in the present, both in Verlia's leaping and in Elizete's loss of self in Toronto, open what Bhabha calls a "time-lag" in the cultural history of the nation (250). The "time-lag" reveals locations where the past imperialist values that have been suppressed, denied, and forgotten in the name of multiculturalism and 'liberty' continue to intersect with the present performance of 'freedom' and 'democracy.' In Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*, the "time-lag" reveals the ghostly economy of slavery that still permeates the trading relations between the First and Third Worlds and emphasizes a vertical mosaic of multiculturalism, rather than a horizontal heterogeneity, that opens a Third World within Toronto. Elizete's disappearance in Toronto and Verlia's leap from a metaphoric if not literal Sauteurs repeat the simultaneously murderous and suicidal gestures of Adela so that, as Bhabha writes, ". . . the body returns now, shrouded not in silence but eerily untranslated in the racist site of its enunciation" (166).

Untranslated absence returns as a resisting presence that demands negotiation within the cultural space of contradiction that opens between the past (Abena and the woman Elizete was given to) and the past-present of Verlia and Elizete fighting against 'democracy' for freedom. The American invasion of Grenada to ensure 'democracy' (read: the military enforcement of capitalist trade) enacts the "*menace of mimicry*" on itself that "in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (Bhabha 88). The force of the American invasion against the will of the People's Revolutionary Government disrupts the democratic authority that conceals the motives of capital gain and protection of investments from Grenada's growing socialism.

The past-present tense of *In Another Place, Not Here* also comes through the

spiral of narrative that begins with the almost-present of Verlia and Elizete, moves far back into the becoming-nothing of Adela, and rhizomatically weaves the various past and present lives of Verlia and Elizete in non-linear and different narratives. Not only is the distinction between the past and the present elided by continual interruptions of the past within the present and of the present within the past, but the past and the present in a demotic Caribbean often haunt each other in grammatical absence. As Maria Casas notes in a commentary on Brand's poem "no language is neutral," Creole has a "zero past tense suffix" (59-60).¹⁸ The ghostly absence/other of the demotic past tense in the present tense marks the continuation of sexual and racial commodification in Elizete's narrative: "Isaiah ride me every night" (10); "Under the samaan tree is where I grow up" (17); "So I lose my hearing" (83); "We sit down close together in the cemetery weeping. I kiss she back. . . . One comrade spin round and round shooting at the sky" (115). The originary presence of the dominant subject continues to commodify her as an object for a colonizing displacement of the death drive.

Yet the shift between Elizete's first-person narrative and the narrative of "she," a third-person other in demotic language, marks the alteration from the object *her* of standard English to the subject *she* in the demotic and destabilizes the categorical

¹⁸Maria Casas argues that in "no language is neutral" the absence of a distinguishing suffix, on the one hand, closes distance and develops community, but on the other, marks the speaker as an outsider regardless of her passport and money (59-60). While Elizete's demotic Caribbean enacts a similar distinction between an affirmative Caribbean presence in language and a disabling marking as other in Canada, my focus here is on the way the absent grammatical marker of temporal location produces a linguistic surface for temporal transgression that relies on nothing outside language.

containment of subjects and objects into a rhizomatic intersubjectivity. While Verlia's narrative includes first-person diary entries and brief eruptions of first-person that swirl into Elizete's, her narrative is mainly in a third-person version of standard English.¹⁹ Elizete's eruptions of demotic Caribbean cut through Verlia's narrative, dislocating the narrative tense, the division between demotic and standard languages, and the division of subjects/objects in language. The distinguishing tense markers of standard English and the political, analytic language that characterize Verlia's narrative erupt in Elizete's largely poetic narrative: "God, she knows, is deaf, male and graceless. . . . His dick searches your womb . . . is a machete, a knife . . . all the killing things found in a tool shed" (89); "Out. The volcano awash in rainlessness, yellowed light and lemurs pacing, lengthening, reaching white arms out of the volcanic garden and a woman escaping . . ." (107). At times, the poetic intrudes into Verlia's largely abstract analytic narrative, dislocating narrative tense, the categorical distinction between nouns and verbs,²⁰ and the equation between the object and the word: "Always the door creaks, a dog barks, a frog's well throats inky, a curtain moves in a breath of wind, a tree yields to a breeze, the constant night flute of a *mot mot* hesitates and she thinks someone is out there" (121).

¹⁹Naming any of Brand's languages "standard English" is contradicted by her use of a nonrepresentational language, as I argue in chapter 13, "The 'Noise' of the 'World Cracking' in Love: A Delirious Revolution."

²⁰In *Bread Out of Stone*, Brand discusses the relation between language and colonial invasion as an invasion of substance itself: ". . . the verb is such an intrusive part of speech, like travelling, suggesting all the time invasion or intention not to leave things alone, so insistent you want to have a sentence without a verb, you want to banish a verb" (52-53).

The absence that continues to haunt regardless of the language spoken cuts both ways and opens a quantum space and movement that resists the objectifying occupation of the subject by language. In the absence of categorical subject/object positions, Brand inscribes affirmative lines of rhizomatic connection across the differences (not split of objectification) between the musical sound, the bird-thing, and the “*mot mot*” for the production of new sense.

Brand reveals a political, imperialist colonization of sense in psychoanalytic linguistic theory. Kristeva argues that the essentially heterogenous subject’s bodily death drive is sublated into an attack on the necessary organization and objectification of representational language (“Revolution in Poetic Language,” *Kristeva Reader* 103). Such death-in-life of the violent sublation of the self as other becomes for Brand the “white arms” reaching out of the volcano and threatening to consume Elizete (107). On the heterogenous surfaces of a resisting language and subjectivity without a displaced, original depth and subject, the death drive returns in difference as the threat of the dreamed connection between body and language becoming real (not a fantasy) in Elizete’s earthy tunnelling of holes in the language and Verlia’s aerial (abstract) and embodied (suicide) leaping. In the seizure/caesura of the symbolic within the time-lag of Verlia’s childhood dream that becomes future disaster, the pre-symbolic sense of something that “actually happened” in the past (126) which creates future, symbolic meaning (246) changes sense on the surfaces on language without an originary subject. The subjective past of a psychoanalytic enslavement to the subject/object split of desire and knowledge justifies the objectification of the other in reductive slavery itself. Verlia

resists her aunt's recuperation of her dreams within the system of capital gain, accumulation, and the commodified equation of meaning with the reproduction of singular sense: "That is frog, we must play all the money on number thirteen" (127). The agency to speak difference is in the affective energy surrounding the evacuation of original meaning in the sign itself: ". . . the waves had swept the house away leaving the bleached pillow trees like exclamation points in the sand" (126). The dream of a deregulating connection between heterogeneous bodies and languages is realized when Verlia leaps off the cliff. The irreducible heterogeneity of surface narratives — in which "too many spirits was talking to Vee at the same time" (128) — and the surplus energy of laughter with no subject or object of meaning amid the "pillow trees like exclamation points in the sand" (246) become a linguistic surplus in excess of the body's life (and death) that escapes containment. Verlia's nonrepresentational leap from the cliff derails the colonizer's intent of closure (death) through always inadequate linguistic representations. The multiple bodies/signs of her inscription enact a ghostly allegory of difference within heterogeneous narrative contexts of resistance and push toward hope in the outside of "another place, not here."

Verlia's suicidal leap cannot be taken literally. Brand is not advocating mass suicide. Instead, Verlia has become so abstract in nonrepresentational and meta-literary inscription that she becomes the indistinguishable element-movement of quantum mechanics, a shift of affective energy, and an elliptical return of *différance* that inscribes the agency of negation. She becomes what Homi Bhabha calls the resistance of the figure of death-in-life, the resistance of absence. Verlia's leaping inscribes a deregulating

narrative movement that Teresa de Lauretis terms “narrative and Oedipal with a vengeance, . . . working with and against narrative in order to represent . . . the specific contradiction of the female subject in it” (108) and the “repression of the very functioning of repression” (109). As Janice Williamson notes in her editorial comments on a draft of this dissertation, this leaping out of narrative also echoes the effect of suicides in nineteenth-century women’s novels, when the female subject cannot be contained by the conventions of the novel itself. In Brand’s novel, the repression of the multiple contradictions of black and female subjects in Western and patriarchal narrative conventions also comes through the resonance of suicide and desiring abortion with anti-colonial and anti-slavery resistance.

These strategies of resistance rely on a negation of originary presence that founds the split between the subject of enunciation and the subject that is spoken. Rather than the psychoanalytic split between a heterogeneous subject who resists commodified representation in language, rhizomatic differences proliferate as the impossibility of commodifying and defining the surfaces of linguistic sense in an intersubjective mixture of “she,” “you,” “I,” and “I.” On these surfaces of intersubjective inscription, Elizete (un)becomes the woman she was given to and both (un)become Adela. By (un)becoming, they become the agency of originary absence speaking together. (Un)Becoming Adela, the woman says:

“Her mouth taste the cool charm of a stone past and I determine to stop this imperfect persistence of flesh jostling the air. Now this time I . . . she dreamless, she . . . I done imagining. Leave is all I could think to do. My hand don’t follow

me, every piece of she have a mind by itself. I . . . she say is so things is. I dreamless. I see my hair taken to the four corners of the earth. The parts of me fly 'way, my head could not hold them together.” (36; textual ellipses)

The interrelation of “she,” “you,” “I,” and “I” enacts an anti-Oedipal unbecoming of the woman (the becoming a body without organs) that is not organized into an individuated subject (representational object) yet also has no body-ego (speaking subject) that challenges the displacement of *méconnaissance*, since there is no originary dream.

Adela's dream of otherness in the absence of a speaking subject opens into the catachrestic agency for change on the surfaces of present performance where meaning has no original intent or enchainment. Instead, new sense emerges as the absence of meaning in signs that enables Elizete to become an Adela who is not Adela's original: “Adela' voice hovered on their hot cold lips, the two of them, one standing at the wall tracing wood lice the other her head in bay rum, her mouth working coconut to milk” (37). In this maternal genealogy of intoxicated forgetting, the mouth chews the absence of language and the tracing of nothing into the affirmative nourishment of impossible milk. The signed absence of possession (*s*) in the demotic “Adela” becomes an apostrophe on the potential for new meaning premised on the absence in and of the sign itself. The split between the speaking and spoken subject of an inadequate, objectifying language changes into the proliferation of uncontainable, intersubjective, rhizomatic differences that enable flight in a negation that forgets the original, forgets the colonizer's naming of racial otherness or enclosure within Western definitions of phallic lack: ““She who name I . . . she forget”” (37).

In an elliptical return of Elizete's performative difference, the meaning of the originary speaker's absence (Adela's) takes on the deconstructive power to alter the "devil" of her negation through racism and sexism into the power of unfixed location on the heterogeneous surfaces of language where "any devil[']s" liberties open lines of flight for Elizete. This citation opens with reference to the woman Elizete was given to and closes with Elizete, turning on the dislocated pronoun "she":

As how she had been left a head that pained her and that would only stop for her hands in the earth, and how throwing words was no use to a woman long dead and gone and who never was here; and how the trouble with the dead is they don't care and this world don't mean nothing to them; and how she'd been left a tongue that any devil want to light on and take liberty. She falls asleep standing up before the woman releases her, dropped and half awake she murmurs more names for Adela — donkey eye stone, blue finger yam. . . . (37; textual ellipsis)

The third-person narrator appropriates the originary absence of a nonreferential and improperly tied "she" to inscribe an agency that enables Elizete to name without a subject who verbs the object. "She" appropriates and twists the delirious and improper gap in language between the speaker and the spoken to change the woman's sense by rhizomatically "throwing words" to the addressee (the reader, Elizete). Speaker and spoken circulate without restriction to the originary speaker's intent and without fidelity to the woman, the originary absence of Adela, or an originary presence in the past that signs its absence through African thunderstones of power. The woman's reference to the power of thunderstones — "the cool charm of a stone past" (36) — becomes part of the

heterogeneous surface presences in language that have no transcendent symbolic connection to anything beyond language and becomes in Elizete's rhizomatic language "donkey eye stone" (37).²¹ In the disjunctive living present, the absence of sedimented connections and meaning in "throwing words" becomes a cure for the absence of the other.

The body without organs of "she," "her," "you," "I," and "I"²² that has no subject strays from sense and is loyal only to her genealogy of absence, difference, disjunction, and wandering without remembering origin: "A stray, wandering as strays wander, their eyes or fancy hitting on a piece of wood, a door, the smell of fish or meat, wandering until they linger and forget where they were going, or until they remember another smell or patch of yard, another house; until in the middle of remembering they forget and alight where they are . . ." (38). Elizete's naming resists the objectifying narrative of grammar (I speak/commodify you/it/myself in language) and engenders a narrative of catachrestic, desiring nominalism in which the words have no displaced, essential meaning and

²¹Thunderstones are powerful objects in Yoruban rituals. However, to my knowledge, there is no such thing as a "donkey eye stone," which is why I argue Elizete's naming has no relationship to originary presence.

²² "You" is also brought into the agency of absence in the woman's narrative. The woman Elizete was given to becoming Adela says:

"Better she than me. Yes. Leave is all I . . . she could think of. All the marks on she . . . me is for thinking of leaving. Each time she . . . I see leaving I . . . you could not stop it. As if my hand was out of control or heading for where it ought to be, as easy as if it was coming to rest at my . . . she side. Leave . . . I . . . she ought to be a woman her dress tail disappearing toward the dense rain forest of Tamana going to my life, she *marronnage*, rain, drenched, erasing footfalls." (36; ellipses textual)

therefore inscribe no split between subject and object. Re-sounding the differences of bodies and languages, Elizete's poetic naming arcs across the gap of separation and allows the addressee and addressed (other/object/language) to become the speaker (subject) in a democratic continuance of the speech act that depends on the unchained heterogeneity of the sign itself. This agency of absent wandering in a body without organs leaves open the space for the creation of new meaning in the deterritorialization of language and subjects. The narrator contrasts this with the complete dissolution of the subject that reterritorializes the body without organs when Elizete is raped (signed as an unspeaking other) in Toronto and becomes "sand" that "is spilling spilling" (92).

Elizete's dissolution into sand is not a glorious Deleuzian becoming molecular that decodes anything. Affirmative deterritorialization on the surfaces of sense depends on the heterogeneous partial presences in the sign that stand in for nothing and function with the legitimate absence of originary signification. Illegitimate absence, impropriety defined through the absence of an existing proper, originary subject, only produces abjection: Elizete begins to lose her hearing, to lose sense, when she does not respond to "the name I thief" (83) because she has no legitimate green card and signs that she is deaf to cover her illegitimate lack. Elizete's rape in Toronto leaves her "mouth, spread-eagled" (89), which reveals the violence of the Western transcendental signifier of the phallus as the centre of American (Canadian) linguistic, theoretical, and economic power. The eagle that signs for freedom and liberty, as the subject of Western psychoanalytic theory who strives against commodification in the split of language, reveals the colonial power to reterritorialize the heterogeneous and uncontrollable surfaces of language as unknowable

nonsense. However, in the body without organs of “she,” “her,” “you,” “I,” and “I,” where there is no originary subject that is lacking, Brand opens the space for the deterritorialized signs of languages and bodies to become heterogeneous speakers/intersubjects.

The between-women floating space of “she,” “her,” “you,” “I,” and “I” is the absence of originary, proper location that opens to “another place, not here, [where] a woman might touch / something between beauty and nowhere, back there / and here, might pass hand over hand her own / trembling life . . .” (*No Language Is Neutral* 34). Presence begins to emerge in the interrelation between the signs of bodies and languages. As Erin Mouré writes of the poem “hard against the soul” in *No Language Is Neutral*, this space that “addresses three audiences at once: the woman she loves, the reader, the self . . . seems to address . . . *the reader as feminine* . . . [with a] love that accounts for history, for the beauty of the place, the line of black women of all ages, the struggle” (43). In the intersubjectively feminine space of originary negation and absence, the historic inscription of commodified objects deterritorializes into a lesbian desiring language that has no subject, no object, and is not premised on identity politics or authenticity. The absence of originary signification enables the deregulated flow of corporeal, geographical, and linguistic signs that create intersubjects that and who resist the violence of colonizing inscription. The intersubjective revolutionary space of “grace” in Brand’s novel is propelled both by a productive connection on the “surfaces of sense” (Brossard) and by a negation of negation through the rhizomatic war machine of Marxist, feminist, anti-colonial, and lesbian analytic decoding that attempts to eradicate the violence of all

forms of oppression.

Chapter 12. Quantum Energy in Molecular Dialectics

Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* enacts a dialectical leaping between already catachrestic positions that change in the contra-diction between contingent positions. In terms of a nonfoundational micropolitics, the multiple locations of Marxism, feminism, the Black Power Movement, and a poststructuralist linguistics creates a molecularity of heterogeneous subject positions. As the energy of dialectical movement between such positions increases, a quantum energy is released that dislocates particles of molecular substance and spins them into different orbits that change the substance of the original molecular location and derail into new, temporary alignments for a revolutionary, nonfoundational, black, lesbian becoming.

Verlia's identity politics in the Black Power Movement connect with but are also undercut by a global Marxism that crosses racial and national lines. For both Verlia and Elizete, a deterritorialized body without organs can open space for new inscriptions, but it can also be more easily reterritorialized by patriarchy and North American capitalism that can commodify and kill. A narrative of improvement (such as immigration to the First World or struggle for the national liberation of Third World countries) propels revolutionary energy, but it too can kill in closure. The dialectical leaping between the various positions that Verlia and Elizete embody inscribes both the pain and freedom of location in absence that creates a not-quite elegiac, not-quite presence of between-women love that is both joyous and cannot transcend the pain. The opposition between Verlia as an abstract deterritorialized body of revolutionary thought and Elizete as an earthy territorial body of revolutionary action in daily life and demotic language inscribes an

erotic connection of lesbian energy in a materialist dialectic that moves between theory and practice. Such dialectical movement can both translate across differences of location and erase those differences. These contra-dictions do not lead to an aporia of inaction but strategically collide with each other in a praxis of continual struggle against all enclosures no matter how they are defined.

In the quantum energy that Brand infuses into the micropolitical molecular substances of dialectical movement, the positions of opposition are not static locations. Verlia's deterritorializing, global revolutionary struggle also aligns her with territorial and organized bodies such as the Black Power Movement and Rastafarianism. At times, she needs the territorial signs of corporeality to keep the resistance specific and materialize her dreams. Territorial Elizete leaps on the narrative absence of distinction between, and proper location for, "you," "she," "I," and "I" in language that deterritorializes narratives of containment. She undercuts the positivism of Rastafarianism with the misogynist 'origins' of the biblical text and reveals the inscription of the same scars on the female body that are left by the master narratives of patriarchy and capitalist exploitation. Relying on an improper relation between memory and forgetting in Adela's narrative and on the absence of presence in language that cannot authorize narrative, she takes pieces, like a Derridean bricoleur, from the narratives of Isaiah, Christ, and Shàngó to inscribe a deterritorialized "grace" in Verlia's passionate energy. Yet this connection is based on nothing and inscribes no text of redemption that would colonize Verlia as the other of her desire. Elizete's territorial, demotic Caribbean deterritorializes in the absence of a subject who regulates and controls meaning. She

hollows out the exclusive and coded territorial subjects and presences in narratives to make new connections of desiring relations between women in Isaiah’s narrative and in becoming the she-devil of negation in the narratives of Adela and the woman she was given to by spitting the milk of desiring abortion to empty the colonizer’s sense. This is not to inscribe narrative with the fullness of a new presence but to create a space of “grace” in language that she recognizes as well in Verlia’s analysis of revolution with no target other than emptying out the colonization of what is already here to open the space for lesbian desire.¹

Brand’s construction of the ghostly space of desire as the beginning of presence in the absence of any categorical or substantial presence relies on a dialectical movement between locations that are already catachrestic or cut through with differences. This catachrestic dialectics is a poetic “sense-making” that Brand says “can lift you out of the immediate dread of living,” a “sense-making which doesn’t spare you the dread but offers

¹This emptying out of representational inscription echoes with Brand’s position in *Land to Light On*. She writes:

Look, let me be specific. I have been losing roads
and tracks and air and rivers and little thoughts
and smells and incidents and a sense of myself
and fights I used to be passionate about
and don’t remember. . .
.....
I have been forgetting everything, friends, and pain.
The body bleeds only water and fear when you survive
the death of your politics, but why don’t I forget.
That island with an explosive at the beginning of its name
keeps tripping me. . . . (15)

The haunting by the politics of place and the liberation in Grenada continue as the passion of desire interacting with colonization that persists in the evacuation of subjects, identities, and organized locations.

you this clarity which is like being able to feel air or night, to feel the intangible”

(“Unredeemed Grace” 8). Brand’s negative dialectic inscribes a movement between

Elizete’s negation that insists “enough” of belonging and lack (42)² and Verlia’s insistent

“not enough,”³ which is also negativist since she has no positivist conception of what

²Although Elizete does not theorize her “enough” in terms of psychoanalytic theory, her narrator inscribes a materialist resistance to the Lacanian theory of desire based on lack and the aimless surplus desire of French *jouissance*: “They had enough of aimless boats and bodies tangled bone-white exhaling colour to black coral” (42). She also inscribes a materialist resistance to the erotic seduction of Derridean distance:

And enough of distance too, distance without cover, Jesus, without a sky, without a hiding place, finite distance, God, islands, islands that came to an end, distance that ran out. Feet hanging, slipping over the edge, ran out. Plain. There were no interiors, no outposts, no relief. No hiding for the flatness, no hiding for the end . . . because really there is no ending, ending is only something we hope for like darkness, and bush trails and blood trails . . . blood trees. (42)

Her insistent “enough” of identity politics inscribes a difference between Derrida’s theory of the erotic seduction of distance and a deconstruction that needs a stronger violence against the already inscribed violence:

And belonging? They were past it. It was not wide enough, not gap enough, not distance enough. Not rip enough belonging. Belonging was too small, too small for their magnificent rage. They had surpassed the pettiness of their oppressors who measured origins speaking of a great patriarch and property marked out by violence, a rope, some iron. . . . They owned the sublime territory of rage. (42-43)

More distance than the *méconnaissance* of origin is needed to evoke surfaces of colliding rage in a body without organs that remains responsible to the specificity of local conditions. She needs the collision of incommensurability: “So they saw everything. Heard everything, abandoned distance, abandoned time and saw everything. They saw nothing could be done. That is how they lived with the dead” (43). Relief comes through the surfaces that have no depth or hidden essential meaning that inscribes the call of the colonizing other.

³The fold between the opposition of “enough of . . .” and “not enough” resonates in the echo of Brand’s title, *In Another Place, Not Here*, with Adrienne Rich’s “Not Somewhere Else, But Here,” the title of a section and a poem in her *Dream of a Common Language*. That poem and many poems in the book including the sonnet sequence “Twenty-One Love Poems,” inscribe a love that is split between the need to be accountable for fighting the violence of the material conditions of oppression in a politics of location and, as she writes in the poem entitled “Transcendental Etude,” a poem in this section dedicated to

“enough” would be: “No one is enough company, no one enough absence” (220). In one sense, the positions are opposite: Verlia struggles to create the new, while Elizete struggles to undo the old. Yet Elizete’s quantum tunnelling into the instability of linguistic, molecular substances and categorical systems also creates new molecular becomings, and Verlia’s struggle to create a new world ends by repeating the old narrative of suicidal resistance. Diasporic origin means, as Brand writes in *Bread Out of Stone*, that “Travelling is a constant state. You do not leave things behind or take them with you, everything is always moving; you are not the centre of your own movement, everything sticks, makes you more heavy or more light as you lurch, everything changes your direction” (58). Such dialectical movement within and between the molecular substances that make sense inscribes the continual nomadic movement of deregulation and connection between elements that shift shape and intensity as they spin off toward “another place, not here.”

The dialectical movement in Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here* is not just between opposites but a movement that changes the categorical position of opposition by inscribing contra-diction within the contingent perspectives. Verlia’s agency leaps

her lover, Michelle Cliff, an intersubjective lesbian desiring language that spirals between subject and object into the previously unwritten:

... *I am the lover and the loved,
home and wanderer, she who splits
firewood and she who knocks, a stranger
in the storm, two women, eye to eye
measuring each other’s spirit, each other’s
limitless desire,*

a whole new poetry beginning here. (76)

between the identitarian political activism of the Black Power Movement in Toronto and the global body without organs of an international revolutionary machine that is only possible after she moves away from the sedimenting ties of home. Yet she becomes so abstracted and deterritorialized that she needs to return to the Caribbean, return to territorial location, and take up a political cause that organizes her actions. Elizete goes to Toronto to find out what Verlia means by “not enough” and loses presence under the intense gaze of the white law-of-the-father, a loss that contradicts the enabling resistance of absence in which she previously thrives. This difference between the affirmative deterritorialization of an intersubject and the destructive reterritorialization of an evacuated originary subject as an object of patriarchal and racist inscription resonates with Nicole Brossard’s distinction between the destructive nuclear explosion of *L’homme long* and the deconstructive and nonfoundational quantum connections of a lesbian “desiring writing.” Brand does not advocate resistance to imperialist reterritorialization with an oppositional return to Caribbean source that would provide black women with the potential of presence. Verlia returns to the Caribbean and is murdered. Any positivist identification of a narrative of improvement is impossible. Instead, Brand’s dialectical leaping between Elizete’s “enough” and Verlia’s “not enough” inscribes what Bhabha identifies as a hybridity of difference within the same “that initiates the project of political thinking by continually facing it with the strategic and the contingent, with the countervailing thought of its own ‘unthought’” (64). Resistance to negation through a return to the source of originary presence inscribes an opposition that is already thought and inscribed, not a hybrid movement toward the unthought. Rather than stagnating in an

aporia of oppositional contradiction, Brand's dialectics enacts a ceaseless struggle against oppressive conditions in a movement toward the always unknown future premised on the impossibility of a single goal or trajectory within a micrological politics of the contingent needs in the shifting conditions of the present.

Elizete's loss of Verlia in Grenada and of herself in Toronto supports Catherine Hunter's sense of this novel as "an elegy" about what is "always already lost . . . [and] haunted by the legend of Adela, a slave so homesick for Africa that she refuses to name any object or person in the land of her exile." Hunter argues that, in Elizete's poetic naming to "'bring back she memory of herself and she true name,'" the "impulse is the same as the elegiac impulse of the novel, which is full of longing for 'another place, not here.'" (104). Certainly, the elegiac impulse does permeate the intensity of Elizete's descriptions of Adela and Verlia but only as an elliptical return under erasure. The "true name" of Adela is the painful agency of negation and absence. In the Christian elegy, M.H. Abrams writes, the "lyric reversal from grief and despair to joy and assurance occurs when the elegist suddenly realizes that death in this world is the entry to a higher life" (51). Under the erasure of negation, the "death in this world" becomes the resisting gaze of absence that has no subject or object rather than a transcendental closure in the full presence of a utopian Christian heaven or any other teleological system. Consequently, the grief and pain in Verlia's assassination and Elizete's loss of agency are never left behind with complete consolation or resolution. Verlia's death, along with Adela's testimony to the violence of the middle passage and slavery, assert both the political invasion of the subject that is inconsolable and the absence of a subject/object

that holds potential for undoing the already thought through the reinscription of the surfaces of language as heterogeneous and uncontrollable.⁴ This ghostly double of inconsolable pain and presence in absence inscribes the haunting dialectic that is not, as Bhabha explains, the utopian aporetic moment of the present separated from the past in which Walter Benjamin inscribes “the necessary horizon of hope” (Bhabha 18). Instead, the dialectic haunts the ambiguity of utopian agency through the mimicry of difference within the same in the split space of cultural enunciation. The mimicry of absence becomes a dread writing that bears witness to the continuity of historic oppression in the present (Bhabha 18) while inscribing lines of continual escape to “another place, not here,” which emerges as the impossible enclosure in the self-same. Cultural regulation cannot control the heterogeneous surfaces of inscription when there is no originary depth or meaning for fidelity.

As several reviewers have noted, Brand establishes an opposition between Verlia’s abstract global politics and Elizete’s poetic materiality.⁵ George Elliott Clarke

⁴In the ambiguity of chains imprisoning bodies in slavery and chains of language with no originary referent, Brand articulates a dread writing of absence that holds both the potential for revolutionary change and witnesses the continual inscription of the pain of the past in the present. The political chains of slavery produce “a continuation, absently, the ringing in your ears of iron bracelets on stones, the ancient wicked music of chain and the end of the world” (65) and resound as the “wicked” agency of “the world cracking” (245) when the original colonizing subject is eradicated along with the absence of originary presence in language. This enables a different inscription in the heterogeneous chains of language.

⁵Ironically, the reviewers disagree about the effect of this dialectical double. Allan Hepburn’s distinction between Elizete’s mundane quotidian life and Verlia’s global political activism leads him to read Verlia as living “in a world so detailed, so boundless in objects, ornament, colors and people, that she comes across as the more lively, more

sees this as the opposition between Elizete's "grace" in her lyricism and Verlia's "grief" that "strays into relatively lengthy quotations from revolutionaries like Che Guevara and Frantz Fanon" ("Poet Dionne"). Austin Clarke argues that Brand's "use of a literary fracturing of character, turning Elizete into Verlia, and *vice versa*" creates a "universality of grace common to Elizete and Verlia." However, he reduces the dialectical function of this doubling of "grace" by inscribing a quiescence in Elizete's acceptance of her fate of negation in neo-colonial and sexist oppression that makes Verlia "the one person synonymous with her [Elizete's] liberation."⁶ But Elizete's radical materiality that transgresses categorical substance already connects her with political struggle: ". . . I was ready for Verlia. She get send for me" (9). Manina Jones reads the dialectical space between "here" and "there," "then" and "now," and "she" and "her" as the desiring drift of a "dynamics of feminine desire" that vaults and tunnels away from geographical and temporal placement, but she also reduces Brand's spiralling movement between Verlia's abstraction and Elizete's materiality to the difference between "revolution in response to

fully rounded character of the two, even though she has disappeared before the novel starts." Contrarily, Gabrielle Collu argues that "excerpts from Verlia's diaries, with their prosaic language, seem jarringly out of place." Elizete, she insists, is the fuller character because of her poetic preoccupation with naming, while Verlia appears more cardboard, filled with revolutionary slogans.

⁶Austin Clarke's review is particularly disturbing. Not only does he dismiss the "grace" of Elizete's deregulating materiality that works toward revolutionary change from the opposite angle of Verlia's political abstract theory, he argues that Verlia and Elizete "become the same person through the novelist's fracturing of their persona and personality," which not only reduces lesbian intersubjectivity to an auto-erotic identification rather than a desiring leap into difference but dismisses the lesbian attraction between two different women working differently toward the same agenda.

oppression . . . [and] quiescen[ce]" (27).

Elizete is not the quietude of unspeaking earth but an earthy and practical embodiment of revolutionary, theoretical abstraction. The narrator says of airy, abstract Verlia, "She needed a woman so earthbound that she would rename every plant she came upon. She needed someone who believed that the world could be made over as simply as that . . . not just knowing that it had to be done but needing it to be done and simply doing it" (202). The dialectical drift between Verlia and Elizete enacts the dialectical materialism that C.L.R. James argues focuses on the "logical contradiction, the contradiction of abstract and concrete" (*C.L.R. James Reader* 164).⁷ This materialist dialectic is the deregulating "grace" that circulates between Verlia and Elizete, the "translat[ion of] theory" into the "crucible of practice," as Verlia says quoting El Salvadorian revolutionary Cayetano Carpio (207). Such dialectical "grace" is also the translation of literary, Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial theory into Brand's writing practice. Elizete repeatedly says that Verlia is her "grace," but Verlia also responds to Elizete's "avenging grace" that cuts through the "armour of cane." The third-person narrator says, "What made her notice that she [Verlia] was the one needing was that grace, that gesture taking up all the sky, slicing through blue and white and then the green stalk and the black earth" (203). Catherine Hunter almost recognizes the erotic dialectic between Verlia and Elizete, arguing that "Despite their apparently opposing views, they come together with an erotic passion that rivals, but never transcends, the political

⁷As I note earlier, Brossard's translation between the writing of Laure Angstelle and Maude Laures also enacts a lesbian drift between abstraction and concrétude.

concerns of the novel” (103-04). But the erotic interaction between the two women is political, not only because lesbianism challenges the political regulation of sexuality but also because their relationship enacts the politics of a revolutionary dialectical materialism that is not static.

As with the novels of Marlatt and Brossard, Brand’s lesbian desiring intersubject emerges as a contamination of systemic location that crosses between the differences that inscribe the political positions of Verlia and Elizete. A nonfoundational coalition politics of struggle together without the erasure of difference floats in the ghostly space between the first, second, and third persons and between the contradictions of micropolitical agendas.⁸ In “Brandishing a Powerful Pen,” Brand notes that homophobia and sexism are the reasons the left fell apart and that the way forward is in abandoning our premises “when we find it follows any orthodoxy” (16). At the same time, a nonfoundational coalition politics does not mean abandoning specificity. In “Owning the Language,” Brand says of her own coalition work: “. . . a coalition is not a home, it’s a room where you come to negotiate all kinds of things. We come with some commonality or another, but we come to struggle and negotiate those things. A coalition is not where you lose your specific identity” (21). But the room itself, like the micropolitical materials in the novel, is a body without organs that is at once material and abstract, poetic and analytic,

⁸Ruby Ramraj fails to see the incommensurable positions that move into alliance in the intersubjectivity of Brand’s floating pronouns. She criticizes Brand’s “failure to identify clearly at the beginning of her chapters which of the two characters is referred to when she uses the pronoun ‘she’: it may be that Brand wants to suggest the oneness of the two women by employing this technique, but it is frustrating. . . .”

lesbian, Caribbean, and Canadian and without the homogeneity and categorical closure that those nouns imply. The collision of these terms opens a space of cultural difference in the continual (un)becomings that change in the micrological relations of each term.

During the first fifteen years, Verlia finds that the anonymous globality of Toronto connects her with revolutionary energy around the world as she listens to international broadcasts on her short-wave radio (152). But Elizete is disabled by Toronto's reterritorialization of her deterritorialized senses. Elizete locates herself and makes sense through the material elements in her poetic catalogues that are not a subject's mastery of reality in the displacement of linguistic concepts-objects or the subject's unspeakable presence in an untranslated landscape or body. Instead, she inscribes a reciprocal positioning and speaking that changes the materials as she brings nouns together, as I argue in the chapters "Originary Negation: Marxism, Feminism, and Deconstruction" and "The 'Noise' of the 'World Cracking' in Love: A Delirious Revolution." Brand does not inscribe any essential meaning in the landscape itself, but its role in the creation of sense for Elizete becomes evident in its absence in Toronto. Elizete finds herself without maps of land that make sense and orient her with an intersubjectivity that crosses between the bodies of geographical, corporeal, and linguistic sense:

After months she still saw no birds to speak of . . . no river to speak of, no mountains to speak of, no grass to speak of, no moon to speak of. Especially no moon. And no ocean or sea. No sound that was the usual sound, no chorus of beetles, crickets, frogs beginning with night, ending with morning. And since this

was how she knew the signs of things, she was lost. (68)

The ambiguous repetition of “to speak of” and the translation between the senses of sound, sight, and physical bodies that are not static substances but rhythms and flows that affect each other in a chorus of uncontainable meaning are the signs that locate Elizete’s intersubjective sense.

Elizete does not map an Oedipal sense and desire produced in the distance between language, bodies, and landscapes but their proximity that enables sense in the connection across difference. In a mockery of Lacanian, psychoanalytic linguistics, in which desire is created in the gap between the original need of the unspeakable proper subject and its displaced and objectified spoken demand, the third-person narrator argues that because Toronto meets the body’s demands it is imaginary, unreal: Toronto “set out so much to please and ease the leg, the heart, the next thought before you thought it, the next need until need was not a word worth saying. . . . This city was imaginary that’s all. That’s all” (70). The narrative of Elizete under a white gaze i-n a white landscape reveals the goal of an Oedipally founded, split desire as a completion that ultimately annuls difference between bodies, thoughts, and language. The political investment of a desire founded on unknowable otherness becomes a colonizing homogenization of the real that can make differences disappear as essentially unknowable and therefore dismissable. In the third-person narrator’s mocking appropriation of Lacan, the city of the white law-of-the-father is not an unknowable essence but unreal in itself. Her mockery raises the ghost of a resisting subject who insists on the need for material specificity and identifies the psychoanalytic separation of the ‘real’ and the symbolic as a white Western system for

the regulation of capital, commodification of desire, and value-coding of bodies. With no green card to prove her legitimacy under the law-of-the-father, Elizete becomes invisible in the imaginary of a white city where language as the law-of-the-father can kill, wound, rape, and impregnate the body with impunity.

The word “Immigration,” even uttered as a joke that is not real, has the power to kill, maim, and impregnate the body: “‘Immigration!’ What a word. That word could kill, oui. That word could make a woman lay down with she legs wide open and she mind shut. . . . Miryam and me wasn’t afraid of the glass. Nah man! What is a window in front of that word” (80-81). The word uttered has real, physical impact that makes Miryam and Jocelyn jump out of the window. The promise of legitimate papers that accompanies the word makes Jocelyn desire and become pregnant. Conversely, it also causes Jocelyn’s miscarriage and Miryam’s broken leg that splinters into “broken white bone” in the hard divisiveness of a Western symbolic when they jump (81) through the liminal threshold that connects the real and the symbolic. The name “Gloria,” which Elizete steals along with the false papers of legitimacy, makes her become partially deaf because her body signs that she does not recognize herself in that name of neo-colonial legitimacy (82-86). Conversely, Elizete’s list of the relation between women’s names and their traits inscribes a resistance to capitalist and patriarchal colonizing of the subject as other. The truth of this relation rings through the very practice of fiction that leaps on the surface relations between the material signs of languages, bodies, and signification, for example, in the name *Verlia* that inscribes new life (green/vert) in a dialectical movement toward (*Ver*, ‘vers’) and between (*lia*, ‘liaison’) opposing positions.

Neither Elizete nor her third-person narrator theorize an anti-Oedipal desire of surfaces without hidden psychoanalytic depth, but Elizete practices it:

I abandon everything for Verlia. I sink in Verlia and let she flesh swallow me up. I devour she. She open me up like any morning. Limp, limp and rain light, soft to the marrow. She make me wet. She tongue scorching like hot sun. I love that shudder between her legs, love the plain wash and sea of her, the swell and bloom of her softness. And is all. And if is all I could do on the earth, is all. (5)

Verlia is not a substitute or displacement of Elizete's desire into the partial object of Lacan's *petit a*. She stands in for nothing. The relation between Elizete and Verlia is not compelled by a displaced desire for completion beyond absence or lack in Elizete as a subject. Instead, their connection begins a process of abandoning the unary subject and opening an intersubjectivity.⁹ The oppositions of wet/scorching, devourer/devoured reveal no unspeakable essence of the speaking, desiring subject, only the affective intensity of speaking bodies opening between subject and object, between "I" and "she," the third-person of an interwoven and multiple speaking intersubject. The intersubjective "[s]he tongue" (that is the property of neither the demotic speaker, Elizete, nor the woman described, Verlia) is a desiring production that emerges in the intersection of sexuality, gender, and a Caribbean demotic. This speaking she tongue produced by

⁹Méira Cook writes that in *No Language Is Neutral*, Brand folds the body together with the text so that there is no Lacanian outside to inscribe lack. However, that does not imply full presence but "a curiously evasive subject, a subjectivity constructed at the intersection of the hidden and the revealed" in the "impossibility of knowing the body other than textually" (90).

connection bears witness to the untranslatability of this particular intersubjective body in the whiteness of standard English inflected by a Lacanian and colonial separation that produces desire. Unlike Isaiah, who “was a hard man, a hard man down to his skin” (6) and who embodies the solidity and mastery of the law-of-the-phallus through rigid division in a patriarchal symbolic,¹⁰ the lesbian intersubject produces no phallic division between bodies, languages, and subjects. Instead, she appears in a womblike sea of fluid, erotic connection across differences that changes bodies, (English) language, and the meaning of subjectivity.

While Elizete practises anti-Oedipal desire, the abstract, analytic, third-person narrator of the second section of the novel, which focuses more on Verlia, theorizes anti-Oedipal desire. Verlia’s narrator speaks of the intersubjective opening of desire in the meeting, rather than distance, of bodies and languages, of “legs wide to her tongue” (204). But she reveals the coded values that Elizete’s nonanalytic “is all” also resist. An anti-Oedipal desire produced by the touching between surfaces without the belonging of coded depth depends on the absence of desire for the colonizing displacement: “She wants nothing more. Not the bed that comes with it, not the kitchen, not the key to the door. She hates the sticky domesticity lurking behind them. She doesn’t want wanting more” (204). In the third-person, intersubjective narrative of “she” and “her,” there is no

¹⁰See Luce Irigaray’s distinction between the phallogocentric separation of language and the body that establishes a rigidity within the symbolic and a between-women fluidity: “Between us, ‘hardness’ isn’t necessary. We know the contours of our bodies well enough to love fluidity. Our density can do without trenchancy or rigidity. We are not drawn to dead bodies” (*This Sex* 215).

subject or object of desire, no narrative of fulfilment, and no hidden, social codes of regulation obscured by the displacement of desire, just the erotic presence of surfaces touching and creating desire.

In a materialist dialectic, abstract theory and concrete practice must continue to circulate. The oppositional leap between territorial location and deterritorialized dislocation can be aligned with this movement of a concrete (territorial) and abstract (deterritorialized) dialectic. An alliance of political struggle crosses the difference of Elizete and her narrator's territorial, demotic Caribbean and Verlia and her narrator's version of a deterritorializing standard English. As a deterritorialized politics that crosses such difference, this alliance suggests a connection with Verlia's Marxist politics of global struggle against all systems of oppression. The deterritorialized sense of a revolutionary body without organs suggests the ability of the split territorial and global struggles of anti-homophobic, anti-sexist, anti-capitalist, anti-racist, and anti-Oedipal struggle to translate across the specifically different bodies of nation, sexuality, and race in partial alliances.¹¹

Yet, in Brand's novel, the distinction between territorial location and deterritorialized dislocation comes undone as the oppositional category explodes with the

¹¹Elizete's demotic Caribbean and Verlia's version of standard English may also suggest, as Françoise Lionnet writes of Michelle Cliff's character Clare Savage in *Abeng*: "the double consciousness of the postcolonial, bilingual, and bicultural writer who lives and writes across the margins of different traditions and cultural universes" (324). But a split that opens through the reciprocity of difference in the relation of Verlia and Elizete would tend to elide Verlia with white culture and colonization, which is clearly not how Brand inscribes her. Instead, both Elizete and Verlia are already split while speaking different languages.

energy of quantum particles that are not identifiable substances and can spin out of their original, nuclear orbits of substantial molecular location. The inscription of Verlia into a version of standard English is not simply a deterritorialization into a global language but also a reterritorializing translation into another territorial body that is not neutral. “No Language Is Neutral” Brand stresses in her poem and volume with this title. As Pamela Banting argues, translation must be from one territorial body into another: “Translation will not pass through the ‘pure,’ ‘universal’ language of reason and its body, but only through the physical, temporal, particular body and its ability to write and speak in more than one language” (224). Verlia and her narrator’s inscription in a version of standard English is also the beginning of an erasure of specificity that can recuperate her as a deterritorialized other within the reductive gaze of whiteness. As Verlia’s narrator suggests, the deterritorialized meeting of specific territorial differences in a global alliance of people of colour can be reterritorialized by the white gaze of Toronto that erases the differences:

She is too busy learning other languages. . . . [E]veryone is from someplace else and the cadences are not the same, new rhythms have to be made and her mouth is like soft wire around these new sounds. She willingly changes, learning the brusqueness of Jamaican shopkeepers, the utilitarian logic of Nigerians, to mimic the sound of “likkle,” the way “little” crackles on the shopkeeper’s tongues. . . . [E]veryone is from someplace else but this city does not give them a chance to say this; it pushes their confusion underground, it wraps them in the same skin and slides them to the side like so much meat wrapped in brown paper. (181-82)

The territorial senses of community, comradeship, and identity evoked by the 1960s revolutionary “cell” become so deterritorialized, by the dissolution of revolutionary community into the “vague nods of anonymity” (192) in the 1980s, that abstract Verlia becomes reterritorialized by the dominating gaze of whiteness. The absence of territorial location enables her reterritorialization in the lack of the white law-of-the-father’s legitimacy. In her work with Abena in Toronto, she begins to negotiate from within the system of legitimacy and loses the political agency of deconstructive sense.

Verlia’s need to return to the Caribbean is not nostalgic desire¹² but a dialectical movement from deterritorialized abstraction toward a territoriality that is already a deterritorialized meeting of geographic, corporeal, and linguistic senses. Rather than a nostalgic longing for home as nation, people, or family, she wants the sensory surface of landscape, mountains, flowers, trees, fruit, “sugar cutting her tongue,” “hot hot lascivious colour (199-200). On one hand, this must be read on the literal surface of inscription: “. . . she misses colour and nothing else. Simply” (200). Yet, on the other, these territorial grounds mark a distinction between “colour” and “whiteness” as well as a literary and cultural resistance in Caribbean writing that displaces the white gaze that can reterritorialize a minor literature in English. In a study of botanical symbols in Caribbean writing, Erika J. Waters and Carrol B. Fleming quote from Bill Ashcroft, Gareth

¹²In the impossible tracing of names of places, some of which are so local that they appear on no map I have yet located and some of which Brand says she made up because she liked the sound (personal interview with Quigley), it appears that Verlia is originally from Trinidad. Her return to (a probable) Grenada is, therefore, not a return to an original home.

Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back* to argue that the "metaphors in poetry and fiction which utilize native fruits and vegetables constitute 'replacing the language of the center in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place'" (391). The dialectical materialism of Brand's quantum energy in molecular opposition turns Verlia toward the material, territorial opposite, but that opposition is already incommensurably inscribed as an erasure of codes (nothing but the simple territorial surface of "colour") and a territorially located abstraction, or deterritorialization, in the meeting of materially specific landscapes, bodies, and languages. Such materially specific deterritorialization resists the colonizing white gaze that reterritorializes abstract thought by inscribing bodies, territories, and grounds in unspeakable absence and the anonymity of impossible and exploded communities and identities.

Prior to her reterritorialized erasure, Verlia includes territoriality in her deterritorializing politics. She consciously signs the war machine of her decolonizing difference with her body: "Her hair fills the subway door at Bathurst and Bloor. And there's a way that she walks . . . Black power straight up. When she walks into the train nobody white dares look at her, too much wickedness to look, too much to account for . . ." (158). Her body also unconsciously signs itself in difference to her willed desire for deterritorializing Marxist abstraction: "She wanted to say something like Che. . . . *You are nothing but an instrument of the ruling class, a brutish automaton lacking humanity, used to repress the body and spirit of the people.*" Unable to translate such deterritorialized abstraction, Verlia's body signs the difference of territorial location that is female and black, repeating Adela's murderous gaze of absence that "spit all his evil"

back at him (18) and Elizete's "spitting image" of Adela (35) that "spit milk" while becoming a black she-devil (12; see below). Unable to speak the deterritorialized bureaucratic language of a pure Marxism, Verlia's narrator says, "When it came out of her mouth it wasn't only out of her mouth but first her finger marking his face, an old gesture marking an enemy, and then she spat on the floor in front of him. 'Never have a day's peace. Look for me everywhere.' Such an old curse creeping out of her. She did not remember learning the gesture" (184). Her territorial body and language supplement the language of Marxist global politics that uses what Sylvia Söderlind calls the "non-territorial," "vehicular" language based on the "division of labour" that "belongs to the city and to bureaucracy" (9). Yet, as Banting argues, a universal language cannot exist. Verlia's translation reveals the masculine, corporate territory in the tenor of a bureaucratic language that poses as a universal abstract. She also includes the territoriality of a sacred language (which Söderlind argues is untranslatable because the tenor cannot be separated from the vehicle¹³) in order make a territorial body for translation: her language and body sign a curse that "read[s] him back to his mother's

¹³Drawing on the linguistic theory of Henri Gobard, Söderlind explains the indivisible connection between the tenor and vehicle in sacred language:

In the vernacular and the sacred, where communication and signification are secondary to communion and expression, the sign is perceived as natural and indivisible. . . . Gobard caustically illustrates the unparaphrasable nature of the sacred text by claiming that if we were only concerned with meaning, we might as well say 'okay' at the end of the Lord's Prayer. It is the sacredness and the consequent inexchangeability of signifiers that constrain us to 'Amen.' The sacred text is intimately linked to a specific cultural/mythical territory, and the relationship between signifier and signified is seen as highly motivated and absolute, or perhaps more correctly, the signified is subsumed under the 'pure' signifier. . . . (11-12)

womb” (184). Even in her deterritorialized abstraction and global politics, Verlia reveals the inescapable territorial bodies that make sense.

Verlia’s revolutionary activity is not always an abstracting deterritorialization. Her politics frequently connect with organized bodies of territorial action, such as the Black Power Movement in Toronto, Rastafarianism, and revival worship, which also complicates any pure opposition between Verlia’s revolutionary action through a deterritorializing war machine and Elizete’s quiescence through territorial organization. Verlia’s participation with the organized action of founding Marcus Garvey Park in Toronto, her alliance with the Peoples’ Revolutionary Republic in Grenada, and her bitter witness to “thirty rastas killed in one year” by the anti-democratic and anti-socialist coup (226) associate her closely with an organized Rastafarianism. Her preoccupation with abstract theories of revolution, her activist and anti-capitalist socialist politics, and Brand’s emphasis on the violence of Verlia’s seemingly nomadic guerilla actions further connect her with Rastafarian political ideals and strategies. As J. Edward Chamberlin argues, Rastafarian politics is characterized by a combination of cooperative commitment, retreat from the materialistic and competitive society of contemporary West Indies, and extremes of political activism (57). Verlia’s argument for revolution premised on the past and present material conditions of the workers links with Chamberlin’s description of the Rastafarian combination of visionary idealism with realistic attention to the conditions of poverty and suffering. Brand ensures that the real conditions of imperialist invasion are not neglected by combining Verlia’s visionary, analytic leap beyond the bounds of the known toward the impossible ideal with the dead, resisting,

and inspiring physical leap off the cliff, beyond the liminal border that separates life and death, real and ideal, without glossing over the differences of either. Verlia's leaping is intensive, which connects her with the figures of speech in revival worship: "It was her speed though, the way she could make the junction still standing in front of you, the way she could move fast in she head" (9). Her leap off the cliff into the air, the intensive speed of her movement, and her seeming materialization from nothing at the "junction" (for the "transport"/bus) connect her intensity with the figures of "flying" (to heaven or travelling quickly from place to place) that Chamberlin argues are commonly used in Myalism and revivalist worship, which developed in Jamaica during the period of slavery and combines core beliefs inherited from Africa with Christianity (56). These territorial inscriptions qualify some of the local and particular senses of Verlia's Marxist dialectical movement by inscribing them within what Chamberlin sees as the simultaneous "desire and despair" that invest an ideal other place in the "life and literary imagination of the West Indies" (57).

While Verlia's intensive, revolutionary leaping to "another place, not here" echoes the organizing terms of Rastafarianism, Myalism, or revival worship, she also takes nomadic flight beyond their systemic parameters. Chamberlin argues that the Rastafarian interpretation of scriptural texts indicates the need to return to Africa (Ethiopia) as the true source of spiritual strength. In the material purification of this spiritual homeland, however, the return is a movement toward a dream home, an ideal place that is "not to be found on any map" (Chamberlin 56-57). Verlia's intensive movement also cannot be found on any map. Yet her dialectical movement between

territorial location and deterritorial dislocation relies on no past, originary location or future displacement into an ideal beyond.¹⁴ From Elizete's perspective, trapped by the law-of-the-father authorized by Isaiah who whips her until she almost forgets about getting to the real junction (bus stop), Verlia's intensive ability to "leap. Run in the air without moving" (7) already places her in "another place, not here." The revolutionary space of intensive connection in dialectical leaping is not nostalgia for a dematerialized, spiritual origin or future utopia but changing the real in physical and analytic acts of decolonization: "Verl is sure of what she make in her own mind and what she make didn't always exist" (7). Like Nicole Brossard's *Mélanie* and Daphne Marlatt's *Suzanne*, Verlia and Elizete push reality toward the light, push toward "another place, not here," by struggling against the material, linguistic, theoretical, and abstract oppressive conditions and regulations that exist. Such political engagement with philosophy not only opens potential in (but does not displace to) the unknowable future but also changes the real, here and now, in the continuous becoming of the present as spaces of difference open within categorical location.

Neither Verlia nor Brand advocates a return to African origin or nostalgic longing. While Verlia's sense of identity politics in Toronto relies on an originary positivism uncovering a true identity of "I and I"¹⁵ and an ideal elsewhere, her actions in the past-

¹⁴Brand's intercutting of Verlia's death in the Caribbean with Elizete's losing substance in Toronto recognizes that a positivist narrative of improvement that defines an ideal location as 'return' to 'source' or immigration elsewhere is impossible.

¹⁵This philosophic positivism of Rastafarianism is popularly expressed by Bob Marley and the Wailers in their song "Positive Vibration":

present with Elizete move toward becoming a body without organs in a global revolutionary machine. Her deterritorialized revolutionary politics names such diverse sources as Karl Marx in Germany, the nationalist Marxist-Leninist politics of Cayetano Carpio in El Salvador, Ho Chi-Minh in Vietnam, Mao Zedong in China, and Fidel Castro and Che Guevara in Cuba; the independentist politics of Mahatma Gandhi in India, Jean Jacques Dessalines in San Domingo (Haiti), and Patrice Lumumba in the Congo; the proletarian labour politics of Uriah Buzz Butler in Barbados; the pan-African racial politics of the Black Panthers in the United States and C.L.R. James in Trinidad, England, and the United States; and the psychoanalytic racial politics of Frantz Fanon in the Antilles and Algeria. Her rhizomatic politics also connect with the multiple differences of black cultural location in the United States, which includes the politics and religion of Adam Clayton Powell and Martin Luther King; the grassroots political actions of Rosa Parks; the music of Aretha Franklin, Billie Holiday, Dinah Washington, Nina Simone, the Supremes, and Otis Redding; the poetry of Nikki Giovanni; and the sport of Cassius Clay (158, 160-61, 206-07). Verlia's rhizomatic sources for the production of nomadic revolutionary thought and action rely on a culturally diverse mixture of historic location and position rather than an identitarian politics: "She wants to live in all the poetry and all the songs, all the revolutionary words shooting the bus double time down

Live if you want to live
 Rastaman vibration yeah!
 Positive
 I and I vibration yeah!
 Positive
 I a man iration yeah! irie ites

the highway” (165). Verlia’s focus is always on the “now, nowhere but the what to do about” (183) and shifts between positions, which also undercuts her organization through the Rastafarian sense of an originary positivism.

While Verlia’s global revolutionary politics suggest a radical deterritorializing drift, the theoreticians are all male.¹⁶ Like Verlia, Elizete’s transgression between territorial location and deterritorialized dislocation opens a quantum instability of nomadic movement in the multiple molecular locations, but the materiality of sexed and gendered bodies becomes an important element of conceptual negotiation. Rather than inscribing a purely territorial and substantial space, Elizete enacts a desiring “grace” that infuses high energy into the field. Particles spin off from organized symbolic systems and connect with other particles in Elizete’s quantum language. New, virtual particles appear as Elizete spins the quantum elements in the material signs of corporeal, literary, and historical inscription into new orbits that enable her to make lesbian sense. The nomadic, deterritorializing movement Elizete creates within the territorial materials of corporeality, language, and history radicalize the earth itself by tunnelling holes in solidity. In Elizete’s language, the black resistance of an intersubjective “I” and “I” raises a positivist Rastafarian intertext that provides cultural specificity but is at the same time refused as a position for postmodern lesbian resistance. Her negativist, linguistic, and intersubjective

¹⁶Although Verlia is, or at least becomes, a feminist, the parallel with Deleuze and Guattari, who argue that feminism inscribes a “molar” organization that counteracts the disorganized drift of a body without organs (*Thousand Plateaus* 276) yet take no account of the masculinist organization of their theoretical and literary sources, provokes a revealing philosophic commentary. Verlia needs the earthy materialism of Elizete to point this out.

“I” and “I,” which relies on the absence of an originary subject to negate the negation of the colonizer’s gaze, resists the ultimate closure of radical new meaning in a positivist Rastafarian reliance on an originary plenitude that justifies an innate violence against women in its masculinist and colonizing exclusion. The intersubjectivity of a positivist and masculinist Rastafarian “I and I” and a negativist and between-women “I” and “I,” “you,” “she,” and “her” bring each other to a crisis in a contradiction of incommensurable cultural specificities. As a textual surface of inscription rather than an essential truth, the Rastafarian intertext continues to resonate the specificity of alliance and resistance for Elizete’s black, lesbian, Caribbean intersubject even as the masculinist positivism is put under erasure. Her “*délire*” of unreading the categorical closure of positivist essence opens spaces for a delirious, quantum arcing between no longer stable oppositions. In the affirmative negation that forms intensive arcs of connection between elements that are no longer positive substances, Brand inscribes a mobile and ghostly becoming of (impossible) lesbian presence.

Contrary to Manina Jones’s opinion that Elizete is more quiescent than Verlia, her intersubjective movement across the heterogeneous corporeal, linguistic, religious, colonized, and colonizing bodies inscribes a deterritorialized yet specific “grace” that pushes against the systematic organization of Rastafarianism by catachrestically suggesting the ‘divine’ ecstasy of an earthly materiality that is already split in multiple differences. The dialectical movement between abstract theory and concrete practice, between bodies and languages, opens a space for escape from the colonization of thought and desire through the deregulating “grace” of contextual difference. On the surfaces of

inscription, “grace” is the name of a female person, a fluidity in manner, and the ‘redemption’ of God. Yet the ‘person’ of God is already split between masculine physical embodiments in Christ and Ras Tafari, who as Chamberlin explains became Haile Selassie I, the Conquering Lion of Judah, in his coronation as Emperor of Ethiopia in 1930 (55). These multiple, gendered, and cultural splits inscribe the heterogeneous linguistic surfaces of “grace” that are religiously and symbolically reduced to a binary conjunction of corporeal (earthly) and abstract (divine) opposition. Working with the heterogeneous instability of the material signs that inscribe “grace,” Elizete investigates the potential for the insubstantial, quantum materials on the deregulated surfaces of language to spin out of symbolic orbit and make new connections of sense that are not freighted with oppressive, oppositional, categorical baggage.

Elizete’s connection between different signs of a Rastafarian writing on different bodies enables her to criticize the social oppression of heteropatriarchal abuse that is hidden and justified by the teleological sublation of material signs to their symbolic connection with biblical narratives of truth and freedom. The masculinist exclusion of Rastafarianism appears in her relationship with Isaiah who maintains the regulatory power of sexism and homophobia. Elizete reads Isaiah’s dreadlocks as a corporeal sign of his Rastafarian fidelity to biblical inscription: “I dream every day to break a shovel over his head which he plait in braids for he reads in the bible that he should not cut his hair” (11). His biblical inscription also raises the issue of fidelity to the originary speaking subject of Isaiah in the Bible who signs a masculinist symbolic position for the resistance of imperialist colonization. The speaking subject of the biblical Isaiah is extremely

misogynist, homophobic, and exclusionary. Biblical Isaiah rants against the occupation of Judah by “aliens” (1.7), the worship of idols rather than of the one true God, the practice of sodomy (1.10; 3.9), and the Lord’s judgement against the daughters of Zion who “are haughty” and glance “wantonly.” This justifies the biblical Isaiah’s portent of violent patriarchal ‘justice’: “the Lord will smite with a scab / the heads of the daughters of Zion, / and the Lord will lay bare their secret parts” (3.16-17). Glory will come when the daughters of Zion submit to patriarchal rule and “name” (4.1). Elizete’s negation of negation relies on no ideal freedom outside inscription. Her resistance comes from reading the oppression that emerges in these textual and embodied signs of Rastafarianism. In her struggle to negate such conditions, she begins a movement toward “another place, not here.”

In the between-women relations of “I” and “I,” “you,” “she,” and “her,” there is little to distinguish the difference between the imperial colonization of slavery that interpellates the black subject as alien other and Isaiah’s sexism. As Teresa Zackodnik writes, Brand’s writing reveals how a woman of colour is “doubly othered by the inextricable intersection of race and gender” (198). In Elizete’s logic that reads the signs of inscription, her body is colonized by Rastafarian patriarchy as much as by capitalism. The scars (“scab[s]” of the Lord) look the same: “All over from one thing and another, one time or another, is how Isaiah whip them for running, is how he wanted to break me from bad habit. Whip. ‘Don’t move.’ Whip. ‘Don’t move.’ Whip. ‘Run you want to run! Don’t move.’ Is how the cane cut them from working. Same rhythm” (55). As Waters and Fleming note, such reference to cane in Caribbean literature becomes a strategic

figuration of resistance to the (neo)colonial echoes of slavery (392). Through Elizete's figuration, Isaiah's whip resonates a similar anti-racist critique of colonization but includes the equally colonizing oppression of sexism. Michelle Cliff also criticizes the sexism in Rastafarianism in *No Telephone to Heaven*. In that novel, the positivism in the Rasta talk inverts the self/other hierarchy produced by the imperialist economy of cane, but the patriarchal religious 'black' mark of Cain continues to inscribe black women as whores to the white master: "Rum come from cane. Drink rum you is marked like Cain. Smoke lamb's bread you is lamb of Jah. Drink rum become like touris'. Tourism is whorism, bredda. You want to favor whore of Babylon?" (21-22). Cain/cane marks the dispossessed wandering of the black, female, colonized subject-object with no originary home.

Elizete's ghostly and dispossessed speaking/writing¹⁷ undoes the enclosure of Verlia's revolutionary struggle in a Rastafarian context by twisting the biblical allusions in the drift of language with no originary speaking subject, which allows difference to enter. While Elizete wishes to "break a shovel" over Isaiah's head and hopes that "the bitter juice from the fruit burn him to death for I know that it is poison" (11), she says of

¹⁷While the doubling of the story that is twice told from different perspectives raises a ghostly spectre of a truth that haunts between the narratives in a rhizomatic intersubjective intensity, each of the narratives is already spectral. As Allan Hepburn notes in his review of the novel, Verlia "has disappeared before the novel starts," and Elizete "moves like a ghost through the streets" of Toronto. While this is true, Hepburn sees Verlia as the "more lively, more fully rounded character" because he misses the ghostly arc of *différance* in Elizete that inscribes her richness and density. In my reading, Verlia is more of a necessary strategic essentialism that enables certain cultural specificities to be drawn in Brand's micrological politics.

Verlia, “I watch she disappear up the junction and I wait for she to break it in the mornings” (10). On the rhizomatic surfaces of deregulated language, the “break[ing]” of the patriarchal biblical text meets with a ‘divine’ “break[ing]” of earthy, material, female “grace.” Without any essential connection to subjects or objects (persons or nouns), the sign of the bitter juice of cashews arcs across the heterogeneous chains of language to inscribe new sense between what is and is not spoken. The textual references to the biblical and the present Isaiah who “ride me to hell” each night (10) raises the sense of demonic possession that connects with the dispossessed worm-like tunnelling of Elizete becoming wood-lice that are not lice, “because try as I did when I was little I never see one of them yet only the rifts on the walls” (11). As the becoming wood-lice that are not lice but tunnels connects on the unregulated surfaces of heterogeneous language to the revolutionary fervour of the novel and the apocalyptic biblical text of wormwood that exorcises the demon, Elizete’s dispossessed tunnelling in language without an originary subject becomes the poisonous cure to inscribe Verlia’s “grace.” On the insubstantial linguistic connections of the text that are never solidified or fully materialized, the healing through the breaking of the patriarchal text meets the resonance of a biblical breaking of bread that allows Elizete to inscribe Verlia with a ghostly Christ-like “grace” of dawning new life: “Is nothing that draw me to she but that and the way she want nothing from me and the way she brand new and come from another life” (10).

While there is already no essential connection between wormwood and Verlia or between breaking the morning, breaking bread, breaking Isaiah, and (not) breaking Christ, Elizete further negates the idea of utopian plenitude, salvation, and redemption by

insisting, “Is nothing that draw me.” But the elliptical return of “grace” through the absence of referential intent in language echoes a ghostly figure of lesbian (non)redemption in the return of “I” and “I” as “you,” “she,” and “her.” The fully redemptive sense is undercut not only because a completely apocalyptic movement outside past and present social and economic conditions is impossible, or because Verlia agrees with Che Guevara that any closure of her “uninterrupted” revolutionary activity would imply that “socialism is accomplished on a world scale” (212), but also because of the incommensurability between individuals in the same categorical location. As Barbara Godard writes, “The collective ‘we’ of feminism” “involves confronting contradiction, dis/placement” and responsibility to the Derridean “trace of the other” (“Writing Resistance” 112-13). Taking Verlia as redemption would appropriate her difference in the name of a colonizing lesbian self.

Elizete’s Christian and redemptive inscription of “grace” returns as a deterritorialized interjection, like the exclamation mark of the “pillow trees” in Verlia’s leaping and Elizete’s interjection “well”¹⁸ that have no meaning other than affective energy. The affective intensity of affirmative negation poses a catachrestic cure with no depth and no foundation other than the surface fluidity of heterogeneous languages. The reinscription of the divine as the intensity of “grace” on the surfaces of language without the symbolic commodification of sense appears in the contra-diction of swearing that,

¹⁸I discuss the linguistic absence of referential meaning in Elizete’s “well” (41) and Verlia’s “pillow trees” like exclamation marks (126, 246) in chapter 11, “Originary Negation: Marxism, Feminism, and Deconstruction.”

simultaneously, ties the sign to the territorial cultural signification of the nation language, deterritorializes the sign into a nonreferential interjection, and resists the recuperation of sense in the (non)sense of Verlia, a black lesbian, becoming Christ: “Good Lord! I say to myself, God wasn’t joking when he made you girl. She was in front of me, staring my way, sweating as if she come out of a river. She was brilliant” (15). The “grace” of Brand’s text moves at the speed of light, appears and disappears, and emerges from the Lethean agency¹⁹ of erasure that enables the transgressive and palimpsestic movement of memory²⁰ and forgetting that touches classical, Christian, and Rastafarian mythology. Brand brings these symbolic elements together in a catachrestic movement that creates new, virtual elements that appear and disappear in high energy collisions.

Elizete challenges the ability of a Rastafarian politics and philosophy to radicalize the absence and negation in the sexual and philosophic value-coding of herself and

¹⁹The river Lethe is the river of forgetting in the classical underworld. However, the river can also be read as that on which the infant Christ was hidden to prevent his assassination.

²⁰In *Bread Out of Stone*, Brand writes:

. . . [T]he romance of making a new life without the past is compelling so the idea of a Canadian — something to be filled in ready-made with a flag and an anthem and no discernible or accountable past (despite colonisation by the British and the French) — appeals to white Europeans needing an empty space, a space without painful history, a past antiseptic and innocent. . . . Black people, on the other hand, living in Canada, coming to Canada, living in the United States or the Caribbean had and have the task of the necessary retrieval of our stolen history. We do not wish to run from our history but to recover it; our history is to us redemptive and restorative; in as much as it binds us in a common pain it binds us in common quest for a balm for that pain. (80)

In Another Place, Not Here draws on this sense of the need to write in the absences of a historical record that is narrated from a colonial perspective but qualifies such historical memory with a need for forgetting colonizing inscriptions and categorical enclosures.

Verlia. In fact, she refuses the desire for any systemic regulation: “I never wanted nothing big from the world” (4). Yet she does not completely override the intertextual Rastafarian intersubject. Rather than including Rastafarianism as the Derridean responsibility to “the trace of the other” in both Verlia and herself, she includes parts of Rastafarianism as elements for making sense in the heterogeneous surfaces of inscription that should not be systematically rejected. Elizete’s language connects with what Chamberlin identifies as the Rastafarian conviction that the sound of the word like *education* should sustain the sense of the word and become “head-decay-shun” (144-45). But her language functions without such joking mastery of discourse in which, Susan Purdie argues, the proper subject who owns the language “seizes ideological power and constructs and confirms socio-economic power” (147). Elizete’s alliance of sound and sense negates the subject — “Who is me to think I is something” (4) — and negates the subject’s ability to verb or order or make sense of anything: “Slippery throat peas, wet sea fern, idle whistle bird, have no time bird. Is a lot of bird to name — busy wing, better walking, come by chance, wait and see, only by cocoa, only by cane, scissors’ tail, fire throat, wait for death” (23-24). Nonetheless, she draws on the Rastafarian sense of locating the shifting material sense of the thing in its context rather than in a Western or abstract Latinate naming that isolates the object’s propriety in distinction.

Elizete enacts a war machine of a black lesbian body without organs that deregulates all systems of signification in order to create new knowledge. She does this not just through a binary opposition of Christian “grace” with Rastafarian revolution that bring each other to a crisis but also in a becoming wood-lice that hollows out narrative

substance and inscribes lines of flight and escape that invisibly tunnel between the coded surfaces of multiple narratives with no originary authority or depth of ‘true’ meaning. Elizete slips within the molecular surface components of Isaiah’s avenging Rastafarian location and his narrative about his lost Venezuelan love and generates an intensity in her affective lines of connection with the Venezuelan woman, rather than with Isaiah, that changes the molecular composition, brings other elements in, and changes the story.²¹ In Elizete’s narrative, the woman from Venezuela who makes Isaiah’s “hair turn red” (10) becomes a “red woman,” which enables Elizete to connect the woman, the red quarry of the landscape, and her own revolutionary resistance with the “red stone” of Yoruban vengeance (11). Because the Venezuelan woman attracts Elizete, her narrative of escape is drawn to places in or near Venezuela (Maracaibo and Aruba). By reading the avenging, patriarchal, Rastafarian narrative of originary blackness in relation to the actual Venezuelan location of lost original love, Elizete shifts from a Rastafarian narrative of Ethiopia to a heterogenous set of beliefs that, as Michelle Cliff argues, were mixed and “transformed into new shapes” as they were imported into Venezuela and the Caribbean along with slavery (“I Found” 18, 23). The red sign in the narrative that Elizete reads

²¹Elizete’s affective connection with the woman from Venezuela resonates with Brand’s strategy in *Winter Epigrams*, where Edward Kamau Brathwaite writes, she becomes Claudia, “taking note of that male arrogance against the ‘other,’ herself so different from that Claudia, yet sharing in the common gender, the oppression, and at last the love” for Ernesto Cardinal’s revolutionary commitment (22). However, a lesbian difference is inscribed in the affective connection to the woman from Venezuela, since her loving connection to the woman enables her movement away from Isaiah’s masculinist symbolic system of revolutionary knowledge and desire.

transgressively connects with the signifier of the Yoruban red thunderstone²² that represents the mercy and wrath of Shàngó, the god of vengeance, justice, judgement, fury, and tenderness. At the liminal borders of signs deterritorialized from their symbolic systems, Elizete crosses the surfaces of narrative inscription in Rastafarianism, West African belief, and Caribbean and Venezuelan translation impelled by the real corporeal and geographical locations of the ‘original’ lost love that enables her to write a revolutionary, black, lesbian intersubject.

Kathleen J. Renk discusses a similar transgression of mythological systems in Brand’s stories “At the Lisbon Plate,” “St. Mary’s Estate,” and “Blossom: Priestess of Oya, Goddess of Winds, Storms, and Waterfall” from *Sans Souci and Other Stories*. She looks at the way “images that destroy and illumine” (97) and “fires that unleash global political revolutions” (97) create, quoting Trihn T. Minh-ha, “words ‘like fire . . . that burn and destroy . . . that destroy and lighten’” (98) that enable Brand to evoke a black, female agency for change. Renk argues that Brand’s challenge to the Western phallogocentric symbolic relies on an intersubjectivity between deities and characters: Blossom calls to the Christian god, but Oya answers (105). A similar process occurs in

²²In “The Shango Cult in Nigeria and in Trinidad,” George Eaton Simpson writes, “. . . ‘very special attention’ . . . was devoted to the ‘lightning-stones’ during a Shango cult ceremony” that included “blood from the sacrifices streaming over the meteorites, the leathern coverings of the altar, the jars, and the effigies. . . . In Trinidad, ‘pierres’ are believed to fall from the sky. . . . [T]hey are symbols of other powers as well as of [the god] Shango . . .” (1207). In “Afro-American Religions and Religious Behavior,” Simpson writes, “In Trinidad, a shangoist . . . may be possessed by a violent *orisa*, and, at another time, by a quiet deity, depending on the ‘work’ to be done” (14). The need for both quiet and violent work is marked by the difference between the revolutionary strategies of Elizete and Verlia.

Elizete's inscription of "grace" in Verlia where Christ, Ras Tafari, and a woman (Grace) who is neither answers. Oya, Renk explains quoting Judith Gleason, is the "goddess of storms, wind and waterfalls, the 'goddess of edges, the dynamic interplay between surfaces, of transformation from one state to another'" (105). This feminine, liminal agency of Oya is tempting to read into the transgressive revolutionary strategies of Elizete and Verlia. However, the drag toward Shàngó still seems more appropriate for the violence of the agency of the black Medusa's evil eye in Elizete's translation of Isaiah's story as well as for the lesbian problematization of the category of women by both Elizete and Verlia. As Cliff explains, Oya, who represents water and fertility, is "the faithful wife of Shàngó" ("I Found" 7). Verlia is clearly no one's wife, and Elizete would rather literally, linguistically, and philosophically murder her husband in a parricidal act against phallo(go)centrism that desires no originary father of speech. The rise of Elizete's black, lesbian, revolutionary knowledge relies on no subject with the agency of access to a pre-symbolic outside²³ or true identity but travels with no fidelity between narratives that "cut

²³In my discussion of Brand's transgression between narratives of originary divine power without fidelity to the god that is the father or mother of speech, I agree with Krishna Sarbadhikary's argument that Brand's use of orature in *No Language Is Neutral* provides her with, as Coomi S. Vevaina and Barbara Godard note in their introduction, "a repertory of residual cultural forms and speech genres from a communal praxis that challenge the 'truth' of Eurocentric forms, marking the limits of their claims to represent 'reality.'" However, I would question what "communal praxis" this is since it crosses many nations and has no organized speaking subject that could form a community. I also disagree with Sarbadhikary's reduction of the opportunities for the creation of new diasporic sense within language. As Vevaina and Godard summarize, Sarbadhikary argues that Brand's poetry depends on "the language of the (M)Other, in the language of hysteria or as she terms it, of the pre-Oedipal *chora*, the language of non-subject, non-object or abject, where the separation from the maternal body to enter into the symbolic, into castration, language and subjectivity, has not occurred" ("Crossings" 41). The idea of

at the red stone in me” (11) and creates a revolutionary becoming wood-lice, becoming vine, becoming black, and becoming flying-dream. This is not a longing for origin but a process of forgetting the originary ties and a molecular recombination.

This is Isaiah’s (original/originary) narrative that combines with his Rastafarian narrative to provide surfaces for Elizete’s deregulating opening:

“She sail me like a ship. That woman could tell stories. It was through one of her tales that I arrived at this sandpit. . . . I laid every brick on that stone house where she take man in front of me. My hair turn red and I never scream in this place yet.” With that he ride me again. These times I wander, I turn my head to the wall and travel in the dust tunnels of wood lice. I cover my self in their fine, fine sand, I slide through the tunnel and I see all where I have to go, and I try to read where they live and I try to be like them because try as I did when I was little I never see one of them yet only the rifts on the walls. Is so they work in secret and in their own company. (10-11)

Elizete works from within to make rifts in the narrative that becomes further

an abject pre-Oedipal space for escape from Western phallogocentric codes is impossible because that site is inarticulate and reproduces the psychoanalytic concept of the unspeaking female and black bodies. Psychoanalysis, lack, abjection, subjects and objects of desire are all resisted by Brand and the characters of *In Another Space, Not Here* as the space of Western and patriarchal colonization. Further, as Gayatri Spivak argues, a mothertongue enacts exclusions and closures that establish a fiction of national homogeneity. In terms of the strategies in Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here*, the idea of a pre-Oedipal mothertongue would disable the differences and molecular specificities that create the dynamic movement of dialectics. Brand’s method of translation corresponds more closely with the dynamic movement that Pamela Banting argues characterizes an interlanguage that has no existing target language such as a pre-Oedipal (m)othertongue.

detrterritorialized in the echo of aerial flight between the woman who sails Isaiah and Verlia's leaping. The story of Elizete's lesbian love appears again as a detrterritorialized re-sounding of Isaiah's lost love (that is also territorialized by Elizete's location of lost originary love in the real woman) when he walks in on the Venezuelan woman having sex with another man and Elizete with Verlia.

In the following narrative, Elizete not only express her vitriol against Isaiah, but she crosses and further detrterritorializes the Christian allusions to "grace" that already cross the Rastafarian allusions with the difference of yet another symbolic system.²⁴ Elizete's narrative tunnels with the absence of wood lice into Yoruban vengeance without originary symbolic intent and without location outside narrative inscription. She picks up the images already in Isaiah's previous narrative of his Venezuelan lost love but crosses between subjects and objects of silent agency and symbolic systems that include Rastafarian and Yoruban vengeance. Through a mimicry of absence in the colonizer's language that enables resisting agency, she also draws on her maternal genealogy of desiring abortion as she "spit milk," which resonates in difference with *l'écriture*

²⁴Brand's transgression between the Baptist associations of the Black Power Movement with the apocalyptic fire of the second coming of Christ, the Yoruban vengeance of the thunder god Shàngó, and the political guerilla warfare of Rastafarian resistance inscribes an emotional intensity in the violence of political action. These ideal allusions to apocalyptic fire meet with the practical Molotov cocktail and crosses the border that separates the two textual narratives. In the second-half of the novel, "Verlia, leaping," the section (not) about Verlia, Verlia waits "for Akwatu to break the window with fire no Aryan literature could survive, no Aryan pulse perhaps either" (185). In the first-half of the novel, "Elizete, beckoned," the section (not) about Elizete, the third-person narrator, who is (not) Elizete and Verlia together, transgresses Elizete's allusion to Yoruban retribution while speaking about the political motivation of Verlia: "She needed fire now. A raging in the throat like water" (97).

f  minine of H  l  ne Cixous's milky white ink that rejects the phallic solidity and vertical alignment of desire in phallogocentrism. Her tunnelling into and emptying out the poverty and excess of the multiple colonizers' languages echoes Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the strategic negotiations minority literature enacts on the majority language:

The thought of him and his hardness cut at the red stone in me from sun-up to sundown. I went in the evenings after work to the sand quarry while he sleep. The salmon dank sides rise up around me and I was silent there. . . . I shovelled, the sweat drizzling from my body as I think and think of escaping him. . . . There in the damp, it make me calm, calm, calm and hollow inside. If I dig enough it cool me and take my mind off the junction. I feel my body full up and burst. All my skin split. Until I was so tired I could not run. I dream of running though, to Aruba or Maracaibo. I love the sound of it yet I have never seen it. I dream of taking his neck with a cutlass and running to Maracaibo, yes. I imagine it as a place with thick and dense vine and alive like veins under my feet. I dream the vine, green and plump, blood running through it and me too running running, spilling blood. . . . Is like nowhere else. I destroying anything in my way. I want it to be peaceful there. . . . I dream I spit milk each time my mouth open. I dream it is a place where a woman can live after she done take the neck of a man. Fearless. I dream my eyes, black and steady in my black face and never close. I will wear a black skirt, shapely like a wing and down to my toes. I will fly to Maracaibo in it and you will see black skirt swirling over thick living vine. I dream of flying in my skirt to Maracaibo. . . . by the time I recognize myself I was a big woman and

the devil was riding me. How I reach here is one skill I learn hard. The skill of forgetfulness. (11-13)

In becoming devil herself and taking on the absence and negation of “a tongue” that the woman-becoming-Adela says “any devil want to light on and take liberty” (37), Elizete undoes her possession by Isaiah and becomes a black lesbian body without organs. Her transgression of narrative systems creates a black female desiring drift (or the desiring abortion of the woman Elizete was given to who “spit milk” rather than provide her child with plenitude). Such translation that deploys the surfaces of narrative inscription without fidelity to their symbolic representations inscribes what Pamela Banting identifies as an interlanguage without the solidity of a target language. Elizete speaks in the slippage between symbolic systems.²⁵

²⁵In “I Found God in Myself and I Loved Her,” Michelle Cliff argues that slave traders abducted people from “the Yoruba, the Kongo, the Fon, the Ewe, the Mande, the Ejagham” (16). Consequently, their beliefs were mixed in the diasporic culture that developed in slavery (18) and “transformed into new shapes” (23). Brand’s evocation of the surplus energy within the concept of “grace” relates to her deconstructive methodology of transgression across narrative surfaces without regard for the sedimented location of signs and sign systems, but it also relates to the Yoruban concept of “àshe.” Cliff writes, “Olorun overarched all other Yoruban deities,” and “Olorun’s gift to men and women is àshe, the power-to-make-things-happen.” Through àshe, Olorun’s energy was “made accessible to men and women to be used by them according to their own judgment” (24). Àshe “is divine force incarnate” (25), not a god but a sacred act, a “manifestation of the divine within” (9). This connects the concept of “grace” with an apocalyptic power and sanction to change the real not according to any master narrative but in strategic and contingent actions. Cliff also discusses allusions in contemporary black women’s writing that draw on the signification of Yoruban “Ogún” as iron and “Oshun” as sweetwater, love, and giving (24); the signification of Kongo Dā or Dan as the good serpent who combines male and female aspects and whose province is the sky and whose avatar is a rainbow serpent (37); the signification of the Fon’s male and female highest deity, “Mawu-Lisa,” as sun (masculinity, fire, and strength) and moon (femininity, gentleness, and coolness) (34). In crossing these sign systems, the

In the “grace” of movement between the bodies of known systems and languages into something else that does not exist, something that has no existing target, Brand inscribes desiring intensity in the affirmative negation of a nonfoundational politics. Negotiation with difference within and between categorical positions is not so much compelled by a democratic responsibility to the ‘other’ as by the potential for the creation of new thought and desiring lines of flight from all forms of colonization by crossing the heterogeneous surfaces of inscription that are not recuperated into a unified symbolic alliance with a unary speaking subject. A nonfoundational politics for decolonization is the “grace” Elizete recognizes in Verlia:

A woman can be a bridge, limber and living, breathless, because she don’t know where the bridge might lead, she don’t need no assurance except that it would lead out with certainty, no assurance except the arch and disappearance. At the end it might be the uptake of air, the chasm of what she don’t know, the sweep and soar of sheself unhandled, making sheself a way to cross over. (16)

This sense of newness and opening that has no target language and identifiable goal other

contradictory sweet watery coolness and heat of Verlia, whose leap arcs like a queer rainbow into the sky and suggests (the impossible) apocalypse of complete revolutionary change, relates to several of these deities at once. Both Verlia (in Sudbury) and Elizete (in Toronto) speak of the road and rail of iron as feeling the shackles of slavery closing around their ankles, which raises allusions to Ogún at the same time as the underground enclosure of such religious signification in the chains of slavery. Brand uses these narratives in the sense that Bhabha describes as the “artifice of the archaic”: “a pastness that is not necessarily a faithful sign of historical memory but a strategy of representing authority . . . [that] negates our sense of the origins of the struggle” (35). This enables her to write an interlanguage that Susan Gingell sees in *No Language Is Neutral* as a “desire for ‘a woman’s tongue . . . [in a] language not yet made’ (36).

than negation of negation and opening a way out of the oppressive commodification of the black female body resists Bhabha's critique of Marxist dialectics as the resolution of opposition in unified revolution. Brand's socialism intersects with poststructuralist and postcolonial theory to inscribe an anti-capitalist space in which there is no homogeneity within the oppositions, no singularly identifiable goal within the micropolitical agendas, and no possible resolution. To be alive is to struggle continuously against all forms of closure.

Verlia's figuration as the abstract deterritorialization of a global revolutionary Marxism, Elizete's as the practice of decolonizing territorial materiality, the allusions to the Black Power Movement, Rastafarianism, Christianity, and Yoruban religion all function as strategic essentialisms that name specific differences of political location. As these locations meet and cross each other in dialectical translation that moves at the speed of light, Brand destabilizes the solidity of categorical location and creates the quantum mobility of a desiring interlanguage that can speak the becoming presence of a black, lesbian, Caribbean, Canadian intersubject.

Chapter 13. The “Noise” of the “World Cracking” in Love: A Delirious Revolution

A unified revolution of the masses in a struggle for freedom and liberation from oppressive conditions is impossible in the contradictions of categorical gender, race, sexual orientation, or nation. Yet the incommensurability of the contradictions does not lead to an aporia of political stagnation and opposition in Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*. The Marxist and Caribbean idea of “one love, one struggle”¹ can only come about if the categorical terms that define separation and opposition are exploded. In Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*, the deconstruction of constitutive categories that inscribe a violent separation within and between subjects releases the uncontainable energy of a nomadic war machine that enables connection by attacking systemic organization. By exploding the solidity of the categorical substances of sexuality, gender, race, nation, Marxism, feminism, desire, language, subjects, objects, and community, Brand inscribes a quantum movement of rhizomatic elements that form desiring connections in intensive arcs that change each other and move toward a nonfoundational revolutionary struggle.

While the sense of “one love, one struggle” requires the dissolution of categorical, objectified signification, it is not, as Homi Bhabha writes, an abandonment to “the endless slippage of the signifier.” Rather, it is a “problem of the not-one” (Bhabha 245) in the already divided absence of those categorical positions. Brand's contradictory overdetermination of referential meaning reveals the impossibility of any coherently

¹Since Brand signed my copy of *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, her newest novel, with the Marxist and Caribbean phrase, “one love, one struggle,” I can only infer the importance of this phrase in her politics and writing.

organized, gendered inscription for Verlia's or Elizete's desire. This impossibility creates lines of flight from colonizing representation by mapping the intensity of love and grief in the multiple and split locations that are negated as categorical substances. As the substance of mapping is negated, the dynamic intensity of movement pushes toward "another place, not here." Brand's reference to Caribbean location speaks the specific national and racial terms of struggle against colonizing imperialism. Yet such place names as "Choiselle," "Morne Diablo," and "Dead Man Bay" reflect the languages of the colonizers and reveal a founding split of catachresis that has no authentic origin. As the place names become dislocated from the territorial substance represented by a geographical map or national naming, Brand's catachrestic naming reveals the continuing impact of slavery that moves beyond the past of historical time and the place of geographical location and invades the diasporic present.

As the categorical terms of substantial location that separate Verlia's Marxist struggle from Elizete's feminist struggle become destabilized into quantum elements, the particles become excited and fly into orbit with each other. In this highly charged quantum field, Verlia's Marxist and Elizete's feminist narratives can no longer "pass" (by each other) for "straight." On the heterogeneous and unstable surfaces of corporeal and linguistic signs as quantum bodies without substance, or without organized symbolic meaning, the arc of one woman's arm connects with the arc of another's revolutionary leap into "another place, not here." They meet and cross each other in an erotic, revolutionary struggle that inscribes intersubjective difference in the dialectical flows of

desire.² As Elizete cracks the solidity of ground and Verlia cracks the sky, Brand inscribes an affirmative regeneration in passionate negation that relies on no precolonial authenticity or originary, prelinguistic space to resist the violent inscription of the subject in objectified terms of categorical closure.

Mapping the lines of flight, rather than a representational object, releases a surplus energy with no subject or object of meaning. Instead, the excited particles of a quantum body without organs, which have no substance other than that which is formed by their electrical conjunctions and disjunctions, form a rhizomatic intersubjectivity that leaps between contingent positions that develop points of contact and an irrecoverable sense of an anti-imperialist, desiring lesbian dread. In the “noise” of the “world cracking,” without the organization of a subject, object, community, or addressee, Brand’s rhizomatic music inscribes a ghostly return of an impossible lesbian, Canadian, Caribbean desire that haunts connected sites of colonizing inscription and separation with a deconstructive passionate intensity. Discussing the opposition between Verlia’s abstract dreams and Elizete’s physicality, Brand reflects on her conscious creation of a rhizomatic intersubject of desiring intensities that haunt the same spaces in *différance* rather than clear character portraits based on distinction and oppositional difference:

²In *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari argue, “Desiring-machines are binary machines, obeying a binary law or set of rules governing associations: one machine is always coupled with another. . . . And because the first machine is . . . connected to another whose flow it interrupts or partially drains off, the binary series is linear in every direction” (5). The proliferation of Brand’s dialectical leaping between lesbianism, anti-capitalism, anti-racism, anti-sexism within the same event enacts this explosion in all directions.

I'm more interested in language than story, in how language can float you in the story. The language the characters are wrapped in creates its own sensory space. Sometimes you don't even know who the hell is talking, you identify the people in the novel not through the usual expository passages but through their voices. I also shift a lot between first and third person, sometimes in the same paragraph. I wanted to approximate thinking, which shifts like that. It's the way jazz works.

("Unredeemed Grace" 9)

Through the negation of the categorical violence that organizes subjects and characters, Brand opens the space for revolutionary connection, evacuates the objectified mastery of language, and returns the surplus energy of decolonized "sugar" to the sweetness and "grace" of the heterogeneous signs that enable the flight and connection of dread lesbian bodies in "one love."

Brand deploys the nomadic war machine against categorical inscription in order to open a decolonized space in which "one struggle" can come about. When the verbal assault that Verlia experiences at a KKK rally is matched by the visual assault of hatred in a woman's eyes that is incommensurably written on her oppressed body with "the letters KKK burned into her left breast" (173), Verlia is forced to reevaluate her sense of gendered unity in the struggle against sexist oppression. Such hatred from within the category of women causes her to ruminate on Che Guevara's phrase, "'At the risk of seeming ridiculous, let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love'" (165). In the literal jail that becomes the metaphoric aporia of stagnation within the contra-diction that there is no love in their common oppression as women, Verlia pulls

the phrase apart until it folds in the middle on the question of love:

“At the risk of seeming ridiculous . . . at the risk of seeming ridiculous . . . let me say that the true . . . let me say that the true . . . true revolutionary is guided . . . the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love. . . .” Over and over again taking the sentence from the middle or wherever her thoughts happened on it, “. . . guided . . . true . . . of seeming ridiculous . . . great feelings . . . at the risk . . . of love.” She had jumbled that sentence every way and always its centre was light and soft, nothing abandoning in it, nothing asked for. (184-85; textual ellipses)

The words spiral into “the risk of love,” which opens questions of desire, identification, and subject formation. A facile acceptance of love forms no inherent basis for revolutionary change. If the constitutive elements of subject/object formation include such molecular elements as sex, race, class, and nation, then the KKK woman and Verlia should love each other on the basis of their common oppression as Canadian women regardless of the other differences. That they do not raises Derrida’s distinction between “force” and “violence” (“Force of Law” 6) in relation to theories of the categorical constitution of the subject that elides their differences. As quantum elements that have no categorical substance, gender and sex meet with other elements of race, class, and nation and inscribe an intersubjectivity that affects the multiple molecular constitutions of an intersubject. It changes the intensity and meaning of the intersubject’s inscription. Derrida calls these quantum elements constitutive forces that allow knowledge to be spoken in order to challenge the excessive violence of unjust state regulation, which opens the space to “think, know, represent for ourselves, formalize, judge the possible

complicity between all these discourses and the worst” (“Force of Law 63). While Derrida does not discuss the violence of gender (the major constitutive element in psychoanalytically based theories of the linguistic individuation of the subject), Brand addresses both the violence of female objectification through gender and the violence that assimilates all women together. Her deconstruction of the category of gender reflects Derrida’s ultimate conclusion that the difference between force and a regulatory violence is that the deconstructed and undecidable term of force “defines a task and a responsibility . . . [to] a deconstructive affirmation” (63) of the continual production of *différance* within its terms (25), while unjust, excessive violence colonizes the other.

Guevara’s phrase continues to rely on subject/object relations rather than intersubjectivity: his flaccid words produce “nothing abandoning.” The “true” revolutionary of Guevara’s phrase remains the proper, colonizing subject and risks nothing. Yet, if one has never been a proper subject in any location, the risk of love becomes the risk of being occupied as the racial and gendered other in a Hegelian colonization of the beloved object in the name of loving connection or an imperialistic appropriation of the colonizing subject’s position. For Verlia, a revolutionary “risk of love” would require abandoning such Hegelian self/other relations: “She could feel Abena measuring her breath and she felt ungrateful as if she were betraying her. But when? Every communion has some betrayal anyway — everytime you touch someone, every time you open your mouth . . .” (186). In order for revolutionary love to exist as the constitutive force of speech and writing responsible to *différance* rather than as the excessive violence of containment in a phallogocentric language, Brand, like Brossard

and Marlatt, chews the words and speaks with an accent in order to distort and challenge the violence in the already inscribed. The categorical enclosures created by the representational language of the subject have to be “abandon[ed]” in order for the love to become a desiring abandonment.

In Verlia’s leap between the love of Guevara’s phrase and the distinction between force and violence in Derrida’s deconstructive position, a lesbian revolutionary energy emerges not through sex or gender but through the mouth as an oral territoriality that refuses the reterritorialization of bodies and subjectivities through the violence of symbolic displacement into categorical systems of language/knowledge that can never be neutral constitutive forces. Between corporeality and language, the mouth becomes a nomadic war machine that resists systematic regulation because it is double and, therefore, always “in another place, not here.” By chewing the language, breaking up Guevara’s phrase, and repeating parts that come together with different meanings, Verlia deploys the war machine of nomadic transgression that acts with affirmative negation on the surfaces already inscribed in language and social regulation. Her strategy resonates with the negating energy of the woman Elizete was given to who “chewed” the coconut milk while refusing any sense of maternal desire in her desiring abortions (28) and the mad woman who “chewed her hair for sustenance . . . for nothing was at it seems” (123), both of whom produce a resisting presence out of the signs of oppressive negation. Her strategy of deconstructing the molecular solidity of constitutive elements echoes with Elizete’s fascination with the places where “the wood was softened by the chewing of wood lice” (32). Her examination of the deforming violence of the categorical inscription

of the subject connects with Elizete's flight to Toronto to escape the arboreal lines of belonging in the places where "someone, some relative, some known stranger . . . chewed her up . . ." (71) and the chewing of the metaphorical "stones" (106), "tombstones" (243) created by the American invasion, that "filled her mouth" as Elizete flies over La Soufrière (106). As part of a textual chain of chewing language, Verlia's repetition and relocation of the "truth" in relation to the "risk of love" reveals the need for a deconstructive war machine to eradicate the violence of colonizing inscription before such love can generate revolutionary connection: "And this too then Che, wrath" (184). Continuous dialectical leaping between loving connection and the war machine that deregulates the violence of categorical enclosure are both necessary to open the space for the affective intensities that create new knowledge and new value-codings in the meeting between partial surfaces in quantum drift.

The narrator and Elizete argue that *love* may not even be the appropriate word for the desiring and deregulating intensity of an erotic revolutionary energy. The deconstructive struggle to evacuate coded prohibitions, undo memories, erase the conditioning of love, and unmark the body in the affective intensity of connection between Elizete and Verlia make the term problematic: "Love was too simple and smooth and not a good enough name for it. . . . She want me to open up my head for hell to fly out" (74-75). Further, Elizete says, "I wouldn't call nothing we do love because love too simple. All the soft-legged oil, all the nakedness brushing, all the sup of neck and arms and breasts. All that touching. Nothing simple about it. All that opening like breaking bones" (78). Love implies psychological terms of relation between subjects and desired

objects. The affective connection between Elizete and Verlia opens up an intersubject that resists such divisive distinction.

In the descent into La Soufrière and the leap off the cliff, Elizete explodes the body of earth to reveal its insubstantiality, while Verlia materializes in the sky of airy abstract thought and political analysis. In the crossing between the categorical senses, Brand releases earth and air, body and thought, from their enclosures as separate concepts and enacts the sense she experienced during the revolution in Grenada as “the sense in the body of clarity [and] the sharpness in the brain” (*Bread Out of Stone* 96).

In the over-determination of contra-dictions and allusions in Elizete’s descent into La Soufrière (105-07), Brand creates an allegorical and deterritorializing flight in the “thickness of signifiers and . . . the impoverishment of the referential” that Spivak suggests offers “a persistent parabasis to the development of any continuous ethnocultural narrative *or* of a continuous reinscription” (*Outside* 67). That is, she offers an alternative to a homogeneous narrative of a minority group while providing no substantial foundation to recuperate meaning within any rational or containable sense. The narrator’s contra-dictions include the plane that “bulldozed . . . the quarry of cloud,” “asleep” and “awake,” flying and falling, the “hot bed of La Soufrière” and the cold stones in her mouth like “ice-cubes,” the “white arms” that reach “out of the volcanic garden” and the black “woman escaping,” Elizete-becoming-Verlia’s instructions to “walk fast girl, be still,” and the persistence of the body’s survival that contra-dicts Elizete’s desire for “something cataclysmic.” The narrator’s biblical allusions include the volcano as hell (“the sulphurous mouth of La Soufrière”) and paradise (“The volcanic garden,” the

“[u]nseen garden, ever and not now”), along with the exclamation “Jesus Christ!” who loses representational signification and becomes an affective interjection that gains a strangely twisted inscription as the signifier of “dying” to “get to whatever place was in between”). Brand includes metaphorical allusions to the garden as life and art (“Ornaments of ash and lava, dust-mouth warblers and mud-caked butterflies, garlandage”) and the plane-becoming-bird (“The fifteen-seater poised, plunged”). She also includes resisting allusions to psychoanalysis in the dissolving line between the real and the imaginary (“Unforgettable flowers of mud and molten glowing sang in a carnivorous and mechanical language”), the self and the other (in Elizete’s becoming Verlia, the colonizer’s inscription of death as desire, and the distinction between objects: “She did not know the end of the plane and the beginning of the clouds”). Further resisting allusions to psychoanalysis inscribe a meeting between the conscious and the unconscious (“waking to find herself still alive but in a dream, dreaming that she was awake”), between language and food (“Down the front of her stomach, there was a thin grey slate with writing on it — something in Spanish or another language”), and between desire as the connection and difference of the linguistic deterritorialization of territorial orality in the mouth (Elizete’s desire “to dance the mash potatoes with her in the well of some garden, in La Soufrière’s dance hall, on the mourning ground at Guaya”) (105-07). These contra-dictions and empty, twisted, or resisting allusions spiral around the negating absence of Adela’s originary refusal to be spoken through the colonizer’s language and symbolic system. The dream-like quality of the language deterritorializes the signifier into allegorical displacement, but there is no symbolic foundation to recuperate meaning.

In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari describe this technique that Brand deploys as the opposition of “a purely intensive usage of language to all symbolic or even significant or simply signifying usages of it” (19). Through an excess of language with no inscribed signification and a “willed poverty” of representational language,³ the minority writer who resists the codes written into the majority language pushes “deterritorialization to such an extreme that nothing remains but intensities” (Deleuze and Guattari 19). Because the intensities are produced by Elizete’s love for Verlia and her grief that neo-colonial violence inscribes her love(r) in death,⁴ the narrator produces desiring intensities that create a nonrepresentational, revolutionary, lesbian, Caribbean body without organs. As “A garrulous flower, a wordsmith of foliage . . . with interminable murmuring” (106), the resistance of an intersubject who is neither subject nor object and who insists, “don’t gaze” (107), inscribes a lesbian decolonization of desiring writing, desiring thought, and desiring bodies that desediments categorical enclosure and answers Elizete’s prayer “to Soufrière

³This is not the inadequacy of language itself, as in the Lacanian symbolic, but a resistance to the codes inscribed in signification. Brand’s contra-dictions enact the necessary partiality of language that enables new thought and desiring production.

⁴By inscribing her love(r) in death, I mean both that Verlia is killed by the American invasion and that (neo)colonization inscribes Elizete’s love, her desire for the jouissance of escape, in the resisting (non)gaze of the Medusa’s death-in-life that negates herself as subject or object of the colonizer’s desire. This also relates to the connections of narrative that form desiring relations with past narratives of the Carib leap from Sauteurs to escape French colonization, C.L.R. James’s narrative of the resistance to slavery in San Domingo (Haiti) that included the destruction of their land and goods to prevent inadvertent support to the advancing French army and the wilful and immanent sacrifice of an enormous number of lives for the cause of liberty (*Black Jacobins* 361).

to open” (108) beyond the binary opposition of heaven and hell that repeats the colonizer’s symbolic.

While Elizete “hit[s] the ground, tunnelling dust,” Verlia leaps off the cliff at the sound of “The noise like the world cracking” (245). The literal inscription in these actions of the violent effect of American planes shooting down a small group of activist agitators fighting against capitalist exploitation and the American opposition to an airport funded by Castro’s money cannot be ignored.⁵ Yet between Elizete’s descent into the earth of La

⁵In “After Modernism: Alternative Voices in the Writings of Dionne Brand, Claire Harris, and Marlene Philip,” Lynette Hunter argues that it is impossible to write an ‘authentic’ history when there is no universalist agreement within the nation on what that history is. Yet, she argues, the need to bear witness to the conditions of oppression and the struggles for liberation in the writing of Brand, Harris, and Philip leads to a realism under erasure:

The pursuit of authentic voice and image has become a contemporary attempt to speak of experience that is denied, oppressed, subtly distracted, and disembodied by modes of representation coming from politically and economically dominant cultures. The attempts have engaged with many elements of representation that Harris lists [in “Poets in Limbo”], such as storytelling structures, dialect, media, verbal and technical strategies. But above all the attempts have engaged with the overwhelming conventions of realism with its currently broad claims to adequate representation. However, the engagement is ambiguous: if your reading community accepts the realistic convention as the appropriate medium for recording history, for conveying event and experience, for persuading, then as a writer you take a chance that any transgression of those conventions will invalidate your account. At the same time an uncritical use of them may simply valorize some nostalgic desire for an essential and different past world. Yet the writer can also overwrite realism as if it were a palimpsest, can conflict with it, or connect glancingly with it. What you cannot do in the contemporary context is completely reject it, or the literary community breaks down; communication becomes impossible and the audience cannot hear. (260-61)

Rather than focusing on realism, my argument for the need to speak the oppression and omissions of perspective from historical records hinges on a materialist analysis that reveals the continuity of a past national inscription of slavery in the symbolic that continues to haunt the present economic trade relations between First and Third World countries. It also continues to mark the economic and cultural valuation of Canadian

Soufrière and Verlia's leap into the sky, they create the impossible apocalyptic cracking of the world in a revolutionary quantum body without organs that is at the same time refused in the deadly literal text. The greenness of Verlia's life-in-death opens an incommensurable space of renewal in the resistance to colonized inscription:

[Elizete] saw Verlia, running, turning, leap off the cliff. Her green, green clothing flattened to her, her back leap, her face awake, all of her soar, her arms out wide, her chest pulling air, leap. Green, green. Verlia leaping.

. . . Someone saw the embrace. A long and dead arc, green and black and hitting turquoise.

She is laughing and laughing and laughing. It actually happened, that the water is emerald and choppy and the house is going off to sea, that the waves have swept the house away leaving the bleached pillow trees like exclamation points in the sand. She's flying out to sea . . . going to some place so old there's no memory of it. She's leaping. She's tasting her own tears and she is weightless and deadly. . . . Her body is cool, cool in the air. Her body has fallen away, is just a line, an electric current, the sign of lightning left after lightning, a faultless arc to the deep turquoise deep. She doesn't need air. She's in some other place already, less tortuous, less fleshy. (246-47)

workers that contradicts the present national narrative of multiculturalism. Brand's investigation into the symbolic inscriptions of the nation is not an investigation into the real. The real can escape in the "grace" of a metaphoric theft of sugar: a theft of the materials for desiring production. The real has no solid substance in Brand's narrative, although it is occupied and commodified with such meaning.

Verlia becomes the pure energy of a deterritorialized war machine in an airy and electrical arc that strangely materializes her childhood dream. The materialization is not the deferral of dream into some other meaning, or her aunt's recuperation of her dream into a commodity of capitalist enterprise. Instead, she materializes as a pure sign of affective energy in the evacuation of the subject, the object, and the body to the point where the surplus of "laughing" without the return of representational inscription changes the real by dispossessing the colonized meaning of the inscription.⁶ As desiring intensity, Verlia's leaping affects the reader who is also neither the subject of sense-making, nor the object that is named, but a "Someone" somewhere between the reading/writing inscription of the author and the reader that creates a tentative becoming lesbian dread.⁷

Brand says that she writes "with a black audience in mind" (Infantry), yet she does not exclude the affective connection of other people with what she has written: "I've gotten used to . . . Shakespeare and Chaucer. . . . the [demotic] language has integrity, and it can be learned and understood. . . . if people wanted to . . ." (interview with Birbalsingh 132). In the virtual production of a quantum becoming lesbian dread, the affective intensity inscribes a desiring revolutionary momentum that charges the reader with the

⁶See Hélène Cixous's discussion of the gift that does not return to appropriation or to increase the value of the giver but begins a process of evacuation ("Sorties" 86-91). I discuss Cixous's argument in more detail in chapter 10, "The War Machine of a Noncategorical, Lesbian Intersubjectivity."

⁷In "An Outsider's Estrangement," Lynne van Luven argues that the reader needs a "machete" to "[f]ace such density," especially "if the reader is white and unfamiliar with Caribbean cadence and the politics of race." But in the becoming lesbian dread of the reader, she becomes a machete.

potential to change social relations.

However, the “grace” that leaps across the “surfaces of sense” (Brossard) and chains of language to make a resistant postcolonial (non)sense that is the beginning of an uncommodifiable desiring presence runs the risk of being dismissed by the reader as “noise.”⁸ In a discussion of Michelle Cliff’s use of a Jamaican demotic language, Françoise Lionnet notes that the difference between noise and communication depends on whether one is familiar with the codes, speaks the language, or answers the noise of an interruption such as the telephone, which then becomes communication rather than interrupting noise (331-32). Full communication needs an addressee. But a text of desiring writing does not guarantee that the message will arrive and requires a desiring reader who is able to make the leaps with the writer and recognize or connect with the

⁸In various reviews of *In Another Place, Not Here*, the authors’ frustrations with Brand prove the difficulty of reading resistant “noise.” Gabrielle Collu writes, “What is lacking . . . is a strong sense of cohesion between . . . Elizete’s and Verlia’s stories,” which “left me wishing for a conclusion that would tie the threads together.” Paula Simons writes, “. . . Brand doesn’t seem to have enough faith in her story and her characters to let their lives unfold in a straightforward narrative line. Instead, the novel is a confused jumbling of flash-forwards and flashbacks, poems and diary entries, and abrupt switches in perspective,” which she finds “annoying.” Joan Thomas criticizes Verlia’s “bitter stance” that suggests “[t]o be white is to be racist,” and she protests that Brand’s writing has “little humour, no hope, no joy, and memory is full of the sour taste of tamarinds.” Even George Elliott Clarke, in his appreciation of the novel as an extended and poetic love letter, criticizes that “the plot and characters are sometimes too murky,” while Austin Clarke’s blindness to the intersubjectivity of lovers in what is becoming a convention of lesbian narrative leads him to perceive Elizete and Verlia as “the same person.” Ruby Ramraj is even more critical of Brand’s shifts between first and third persons that “seems overdone here and often fragments the narrative.” Ramraj reduces the lesbian convention of a reciprocal intersubjectivity with no subject and no object to “the oneness of the two women” and finds “discomfiting” and “frustrating” Brand’s “failure to identify clearly at the beginning of her chapters which of the two characters is referred to when she uses the pronoun ‘she.’”

desiring ghost that rises in the intensity of movement between the spaces of inscription in the “noise like the world cracking” (245). The deconstruction of the old and the ghostly inscription of the new is both the “everlasting noise” of signification in the enormous “machine” of imperialist capitalism that Elizete cannot get used to (69) and the postcolonial absence of signification with which the “murmuring nothing” (26) of Adela and the woman Elizete was given to resist the (neo)colonial commodification of objectification.

The “noise” of “the world cracking” is also a shift in what Barbara Godard calls the parallax of vision in lesbian writing that changes noise into communication and vice versa. The dominant narrative of American imperialism becomes the “noise” of “*po, po, po, po, pound*” (246) and “the grit, grit, groaning bombs’ groan” (244), while the imperialist sublimation and negation of the other as nature/noise is erased by a rhizomatic music: “the sound of bees and cicadas singing tautly tightened the air. . . . Their singing thick as electric wires . . . suspended the island” (117). On the rhizomatic chains of language with no substantial location or categorical organization, their electric singing is answered by the electric arc of Verlia’s leaping and becomes the resistance of “the bees barking, the cicada shouts” (245) that communicates the irreducible meaning of affective intensity in the resisting noise of life itself.

The intersubjectivity of a body without organs makes a rhizomatic music that does not inscribe the unity of a lesbian, Caribbean, Canadian community or the necessary

connection between the speaker and the addressee.⁹ Rather than making sense within the arboreal and territorial connections of home or familiarity, the rhizomatic music of intersubjectivity is an evacuation of signification in “signs” of place that “came hanging like clothes on a line, close, the way clothes are empty and slap wet against the face, stretching from a house to nowhere or at a distance appearing abruptly hung in the air” (70). The signs of the rhizomatic music of this particular body without organs connect with the systems of organized sense that inscribe a lesbian, Caribbean, Canadian community but emerge as a ghostly presence that continues to haunt the evacuation of the subject and the object of signification in a colonizing language. This evacuation of the proper subject resists Georges Bataille’s theory of heterogeneity as the unassimilable dregs of society:¹⁰ “like Saturday night clothes, all rumpled and slept in with somebody still wearing them Sunday morning” (Brand 46). These dregs of resisting and unorganized presence still inscribe the colonizer’s gaze. But the nonreferential space that

⁹This sense of a lesbian rhizomatic intersubjectivity that has no subject or object is very different from the sense of sameness that Méira Cook argues Brand uses in *No Language Is Neutral* to resist Lacanian lack. Cook writes, “. . . the eye that looks and the eye that is seen, are identical” (90). Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here* inscribes desire in the connections between differences that push thought further from self-same reflection in bodies or languages.

¹⁰In *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-1939*, Georges Bataille’s metaphors of the “solar anus” (5-9) and the proletarian mole who tunnels in “the bowels of the earth” (35) posit that which cannot be assimilated into the system as the production of refuse. While Elizete’s tunnelling connects with the proletarian mole, Brand’s description of “the blast of country music each time the door opened, carpets, stinking of shoes, piss, beer, the soar, foam and lashing waves of alcohol thrown up” (46) and her metaphors of old slept-in clothes suggest Bataille’s theory of heterogenous refuse romanticizes the margins. The improper refuse is part of Elizete’s depression and oppression, rather than a metaphor for finding a way out of systemic inscription.

is the cultural, literary, and historical, rhetorical context of resistance through originary negation in the dark gap that is (not) *la scène blanche* of “délire”¹¹ cannot be taken in terms of organized, colonized sense. The negation of the subject cannot produce the organization or continuity of subjects in communal presence.

Elizete, who is “a woman without a reason to live if she could tell her [Abena] nothing,” if she could not “feel the same pain with someone else” (103), is initially devastated because of the lack of communal legitimacy:

She wanted her [Abena] to know without saying, to pick up as if they were in the middle of a conversation. As if she'd run to the line to get clothes out of the rain and then returned finishing a sentence . . . in that darkness with those words between them blooming, the light going before they knew it. (111-12)

But the signs of language, bodies, and communities clothe and disclothe nothing — essentially, originally, territorially — only the difference of a lisp in the mouth of language that brings up short the language conventionally used to describe the affective social connections between people, the need to make sense, and the need, as Jean-François Lyotard argues in *The Postmodern Condition*, for at least one other to legitimate

¹¹This is and is not what Derrida terms “la scène blanche.” It is the movement toward what has been unspoken enabled by the signs of language with no phallogocentric speaker as the displaced, original, positive concept. Yet this scene of language opens in a resistance to the whiteness of the colonizer’s gaze. Similarly, it is and is not the “dark continent” of Luce Irigaray’s investigation of a fluid undefined space in the unspoken and the almost-formed that resists the sexist exclusion of women except as an unspeaking reflection of the commodifying phallogocentric gaze. Brand’s investigation of the capitalist commodification of black bodies resists Irigaray’s metaphorical conflation of the not-said with the racist inscription of a mysterious and erotic elsewhere in Africa.

knowledge by agreeing on a set of criteria through which to evaluate competence (19). While there is no community of subjects, the trace of a legitimating community in the rhizomatic intersubjects that cross connected sites with passionate intensity provides Elizete with the space to make a noisy music rather than sounding “wheedling, small, off-key somehow, beggardly” (95).

Sagri Dhairyam argues that “Movements for lesbian identity, for black lesbian identity, for Native American gay identity, for S/M lesbians, for third world women’s rights, among others, invoke a spectrum of such overlapping yet conflicted speech acts indicative of the predicaments of resistance and power” (42). But Verlia takes no such subject position of “will/naming that construct identity” even through conflicted exclusions (Dhairyam 40). Verlia insists on the difference between a Eurocentric masculinist theory of Derridean *différance* in the performance of a speech act and a leaping nowhere but out that is without a subject or social legitimacy: “‘I am not a man,’ she had said, ‘I cannot take care of you like that; a man can promise things that will never happen not because he is lying but because they are within his possibilities in the world. . . . I can’t promise you’” (72-73). Rather than complicity with (and resistance to) the embedded social vectors of power that enable the performative speech act to change the world, as in J.L. Austin’s famous speculation on the promise of realization within the words “I do” performed during the wedding ceremony, Elizete’s narrator says, “This was no rescue. Apart from that truth she had left her nothing. Nothing at least that people ever left lovers or wives or husbands” (72). The intersubjective relations between “I” and “I,” “you,” and “she,” between Abena, Adela, Verlia, Elizete, and the woman she was given

to in the displacement of language and place establish no legitimacy of presence and power to name and construct knowledge. Rather, they provide the potential of affirmative negation that opens without a subject. Rather than Lyotard's example of the dean whose authority establishes the truth of his statement, "The university is open" (9), or Judith Roof's discussion in *A Lure of Knowledge* of the lesbian displacement of "I do" with "I desire" that establishes the authority of a female subject to desire rather than to be the desired object (108-18), Verlia says, "I have work here. Nothing is safe." Rather than constructing truths, Verlia undoes truths and proposes only the promise of creating an anti-imperialist lesbian space that is categorically unsafe and without authority. Elizete's immediate response of "Liar" (72) negatively affirms this unsafe, noncategorical space without the authority of communal identity by changing from an addressee into a contradictory speaker. Further, Verlia's inability to say what she is drawn to in Elizete is a refusal of the binary relations of desiring subject and desired object. Desire and legitimacy rise as catachrestic spaces of "grace" that haunt the sites of evacuated subjects, objects, and desire with deconstructive and delirious potential.¹²

The noise of no connection becomes a rhizomatic intersubjective music between Elizete and Abena¹³ speaking together (and not) about the mothering of nothing:

Was her [Abena's] voice easing or was it that she was talking to herself, hearing it

¹²In a rhizomatic intersubjectivity, Elizete goes to Toronto to search for the "traces" of Verlia, haunting the sites she imagines Verlia moved through.

¹³*Abena* forms lines of material linguistic connection with *Adela* and her originary negation of meaning in the slippage between similar sounds that inscribe connection within a body of language that has no obvious signification.

in her head, playing with the sound of herself until only the sound itself mattered, how perfect it was, how truthful it was and she had arrived at it. She seemed to reach the end that morning and Elizete lying under the window murmuring her names did not stop but gave her the music to finish. Blue fly, bottle fish, butter nose, sugar head, ant road, sandy house. . . . Abena was dry-eyed and shining as if she'd finally understood. . . She let it go, making her words float into perfection, slipping off her tongue so sane. (237-38)

The truthful sound of (non)sense, of language without the reterritorialized colonization of sense, establishes the “music” for an intersubjective, lesbian, Caribbean, Canadian desire in the intensive connections between Elizete and Abena who are both speakers at the same time, speaking different texts that cross with affective energy. Speaking of the rhizomatic music of their coauthorship, Deleuze and Guattari write in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what bodies without organs it makes its own converge. (4)

Brand inscribes the connections between Abena and Elizete that link with the narrative surfaces of resistance in female and black absence and create a rhizomatic music of intensive lines of connection with various already heterogeneous bodies that are Caribbean, Canadian, and lesbian. Because this rhizomatic intersubject does not have the

coherence of a subject or a community, I too, as a white lesbian reader of the desiring leaps between points with no substantial originary meaning, am drawn into and become part of a black lesbian body without organs, at least temporarily, making noisy music by haunting the same sites in the “cracking” of “the world.”¹⁴

In the seizure/caesura of language, Brand inscribes what musician/poet Lillian Allen calls the “reggae resistance riddim” that is shot full of holes, gaps, silences, deaths, and absences. *In Another Place, Not Here* is not ‘about’ the invasion of Grenada but forms lines of intensive connection that disperse across the Caribbean in a catachrestic nominalism that draws on and refuses the arboreal spaces of national or territorial connection. Elizete’s insistence that “the samaan was my mother” (17) opens the contradiction of *différance* within noncategorical space. On the surface of language, the samaan, as a tree, raises the issue of roots. On the other hand, the impossibility of the equation between a tree and a mother reveals the (non)sense in that connection.

Brand’s naming of places follows a similar incommensurable logic that strategically deploys a local naming of places that resist meaning and location on American and European ‘standard’ maps. This echoes with the nonreferential difference

¹⁴In a review of *Bread Out of Stone*, Audrey Thomas notes the pain and anger she experienced while reading Brand’s indictments of racism. Yet Thomas insists these essays not only challenge one’s white sense of not being complicit with racism, but they inscribe many lines of connection between the writer and the reader. While Thomas mentions her connection with Brand’s portraits of women and challenge to sexism, Brand also clearly connects with Thomas in her nonrepresentational language that is “highly crafted, full of cadences and repetitions, full of the painter’s eye and the poet’s ear.” Listening to Brand read from *In Another Place, Not Here*, Clifton Joseph remarked “he was stung by its sensuality. ‘Whoee, I’m an honorary lesbian tonight, baby,’ he remembers thinking” (“Being Dionne” 69).

of Brand's language from the 'standard' referential use even in the passages that are usually recognized as 'standard' English.¹⁵ Verlia remembers "August in the hills at Nariva" and "the green well of water named River Mitán" (116), places which locate her childhood in Trinidad, but which are not to be found in Rand and McNally.¹⁶ Elizete descends into La Soufrière when she is flying over St. Vincent, which suggests specific location. Yet the name *Soufrière* nomadically disperses across the Caribbean and includes such differences as the town in Dominica, the town and volcanic sulphur springs in St. Lucia, the mountain range and volcano in Montserrat, and the volcanic mountain in Guadeloupe. Further, Elizete dreams of dancing with Verlia in "La Soufrière's dance hall, on the mourning ground at Guaya" (105) as she flies over/descends into La Soufrière. But *Guaya* is the abbreviated name that Brand uses in *No Language Is Neutral* for Guayaguayare in Trinidad (22), the place of her early childhood. Representational geographical place becomes difficult to locate.

The connection between the American invasion of a Caribbean island and Grenada seems irrefutable for several reasons: such location is supported by the connection between Verlia's leap off the cliff and the naming of *Sauteurs* in Grenada

¹⁵See the comments in chapter 12, "Quantum Energy in Molecular Dialectics," about Verlia's use of a version of standard English.

¹⁶Ironically, *Reader's Digest Atlas of the World* (1990), produced by the popular disseminator of commodified cultural information, locates the small town and hot spring named Truth or Consequences in New Mexico that I comment upon in the section on Nicole Brossard, but reduces the scale of the Caribbean to near-molecular size that disables the naming of much more than the major cities like St. George's and Victoria in Grenada. La Soufrière in St. Vincent and Guadeloupe are, however, included, perhaps marking the Caribbean with the focus of tourism, rather than the struggle to survive.

after the famous leap of the Caribs;¹⁷ Verlia travels along the east shore where the contested airport in Grenada lies and refers to the People's Revolutionary Government, which governed Grenada before the coup; further, Brand has written repeatedly about her time in Grenada during the invasion.¹⁸ Yet Verlia's description of the route she travels on the "transport" seems to defy location:

All the names of places here are as old as slavery. I've learned some in the weeks going to Caicou along Eastern Road. The transport passes Choiselles and Morne Diablo and Arima and La Chapelle. These small places, somewhere like where I come from. Morne Rouge and Fer de Lance and Moruga and Dead Man Bay, Las Cuevas and Petit Homme and Gros Homme. The meanings underneath are meanings I don't know even though I was born somewhere here, but I can hear in the way people say them, the driver on the transport calling them out "Choiselle! Talk fast, talk fast!" and the old women passengers, "Morne Diablo, darling, let me down there." "Saint Michel sweet boy, take a dollar." "You in a hurry or what? Look drop me by Petit Homme eh!" I've never said the name of a place like this, dropping darling and sweet boy and eh after them. You would have to know

¹⁷In *Bread Out of Stone*, Brand mentions the cliff at Sauteurs that is part of her sense in Grenada during the revolution of a clarity that accompanies the shedding of social codes: "The desire for the sight of the drop to water at Sauteres, the milk of ocean at Petite Martinique, how a woman digging yams in the bush can emerge, hands big as night. Things fell away, the slough of patriarchal life, the duty of female weakness, the fear that moves it, the desire grafted to it" (142).

¹⁸Brand writes about the invasion of Grenada in her poetry collection *Chronicles of the Hostile Sun* and her book of essays *Bread Out of Stone*.

a place for that and I don't really know anywhere. But I enjoy the way they say it. (211)

These may be local places in Grenada that only someone who really knows the place in its local naming would recognize, but Morne Diablo, Arima, Moruga, Morne Rouge, and Las Cuevas are in Trinidad. Yet Verlia cannot be in Trinidad since to go “to Caicou along Eastern Road” passing through “Choiselles and Morne Diablo and Arima and La Chapelle” makes no logical, systematic, geographical sense. Morne Diablo is in the south-west of Trinidad, and travel along the western coast to Arima, which is near the north coast in the middle between the east and west sides of the island, would make geographical sense.

Instead of substantially locating place, Brand catachrestically names places that form intensive lines of connection with Caribbean presence in the absence of firm representational location that infuses the play of sound. Brand said to me during the launch of *At the Full and Change of the Moon* that some of the names in the novel are not places at all but sounds that she liked. The “mystery of names,” she writes in *Bread Out of Stone*, are “maps are for passing word of mouth, the way to another place like Moriah for purposes of dancing and lovemaking,” names that circulate in children’s songs filled with meaningless sound words that open space for speculation on escape from slavery (62-63) and connect in affective energy with lesbians searching for “cryptic . . . signals for escape” (64-65). Such catachrestic naming puts language back into the corporeal and territorial orality of the mouth that has no ‘meaning,’ except as movement away from the violence of colonizing, objectifying, imperialist language that refers back to the speaking

subject of the French (“Gros Homme”), Spanish (“Morne Diablo”), and British/American (“Dead Man Bay”) colonizer’s tongue. “Moriah” becomes the fluidity of nonreferential location that inscribes a way out for Elizete who takes the bitter words of negation spoken by the woman-she-was-given-to-who-becomes-Adela and soaks the signs, “the dress waist,” “in water again, drenching it in the dampness of Moriah, the air standing in water in Moriah, filling it out to the full bloom of Adela, each time the story came towards her standing against the wall” (32-33). Crossing the threshold of elemental distinctions opens the space for another sense not here in a nonrepresentational language that is not the commodification and enslaved export of life for the economic gain of the proper subject.

An erotic sense of *différance* emotionally charges the connections between things that are no longer solid substances. The loving connections of “délire” are not the seduction of distance that operates in a self/other, subject/object binary but the points that touch without inscribing the self-same knowledge. A touchpoint that can change sense and subjects opens in the proximity of difference: “the sea near enough to smell and far enough to desire” (21) — a space where sense moves into “Something in her so new . . . she can’t figure it out yet” (169). Rather than relying on an external propriety of the speaking subject that is displaced by the objectification of inscription, Elizete’s process of becoming lesbian dread that dispossesses the colonizer chews the language of what is already inscribed and reduces the narratives to quantum components with which she can make new sense that has no fidelity, or straight connection, to the original texts.

Consequently, when Verlia arrives and talks about revolution as “taking all the land and giving it to people who work it all their life,” Elizete says, “Revolution, my ass” and

“pass she straight” (13). Verlia’s seeming fidelity to the Marxist text of capitalist oppression leaves no loose ends for the connections of desiring transgression: “What don’t meet you don’t pass you” (6). The revolution in Elizete’s mind is vengeance in Maracaibo against patriarchal colonization. But the absence of representational meaning chained to categorical containment speaks through Verlia’s “look” that conveys a between-women desire that is not a linguistic act but a territorial speaking of corporeality that challenges the systemic organization of desire and knowledge through linguistic definition. Elizete can no longer pass for straight as the surfaces of partial sense proliferate and touch between bodies and languages:

“Sister.” I know I hear it, murmuring just enough to seem as if it was said but not something that only have sense in saying. I know I hear it silver, silver clinking like bracelets when a woman lift her arm to comb hair. Silvery, silvery the wind take it. It hum low and touch everything on the road. Things in me. I feel it cuff my back. I have to take air. A spirit in the road. It make a silence. It feel like rum going through my throat, warm and violent so the breath of her mouth brush my ear. Sweet sweet, my tongue sweet to answer she and it surprise me how I want to touch she teeth and hold she mouth on that word. (14)

The passing of sense between bodies and languages opens holes in the already spoken of either Elizete’s feminist Maracaibo or Verlia’s anti-capitalist revolution for the desiring rush of a radical black lesbian revolutionary elsewhere.¹⁹ This is not sense that “pass she

¹⁹Brand also reveals the inability of the Marxist narrative to address Verlia’s issues of colonization, which include the colonization of desire, when she is inspired to

straight” but a drift and *dérive* that occurs in rhizomatic connection.

Brand plays with the difference within the same of “passing” as belonging and assimilating into the white capitalist and patriarchal worlds (39, 40, 52, 132) and “passing” as what touches while passing by and changes intersubjective elements. An intersubject emerges as the liminal connections of influence between such partial elements as bodies, health, languages, thoughts, systems, methods, geography, landscape, weather, animals, histories, narratives, and literatures that have no essential meaning in themselves but make meaning in contextual relation. These partial elements affect the individual who is not a unary subject or its proper heterogeneity that is displaced in systems of representation but a body without organs that becomes a site for such interaction. In the elliptical return of difference within the word “passing,” Brand pushes toward new inscription that relies on no originary concept outside language but mines the heterogeneity within the word itself. Making another kind of sense by leaping between the heterogenous signs of life and language is a threshold experience, “a draft of cold air passing a doorstep” (55). Negation as the death-in-life of oppression returns in affirmative difference as the life-in-death of postcolonial narrative resistance that is made possible only by the absence of a speaking subject who organizes language into representational symbolic systems for the (displaced) inscription of originary sense.

Elizete starts speaking the rhizomatic music of language shot full of holes when

revolutionary action by the erotic body and language of a woman who addresses her: “The meeting is over and the hand face mouth beside her belongs to a woman and she says, ‘Sister, you want to sign up for a committee? We need to poster for the rally against the Klan. I’m Abena’” (171).

she and Abena begin speaking the negativist elemental absence of an intersubjective body without organs that begins to make sense in contextual interrelation. In the following passage there is still no subject who verbs the object and no linear narrative of progression, but the intense love and grief in the lives Elizete and Verlia share become sensible in a poetic music that brings nouns associated with Verlia's revolutionary leaping off the cliff into the sea into collision with nouns associated with Elizete's descent into the flowering mud of La Soufrière:

Rock leap, wall heart, rip eye, cease breath, marl cut, blood leap, clay deep, coal dead, coal deep, never rot, never cease, sand high, bone dirt, dust hard, mud bird, mud fish, mud word, rock flower, coral water, coral heart, coral breath . . . (241-42; textual ellipses)

Elizete's quantum language speaks the inspiring intensities of resistance, perpetual struggle, love, death, rhythm, and breath that is the "noise" of nothing but life that cracks the world in a continuous dialectical movement between territorial earth and abstract sky, as well as between the aspects that Deleuze and Guattari call the smooth space of holey earth and the striated space of arboreal alignment. Elizete enunciates a rhizomatic intersubjectivity that is more than the complete evacuation of sense and inscribes an intersubject as the passion of analytic, corporeal, and material desire in the real of the elemental world's particle connections. Her language that brings the two together without the specular gaze of self/other and subject/object opens agency for change in an affirmative negation that resonates with Verlia's resistance to nihilism through a love in which "You wasn't enough and I wasn't there" (240). This rhizomatic intersubjectivity is

not the shadowy violence of appropriation and seduction²⁰ that Elizabeth Meese argues persists in a lesbian erotics of writing and relation in which the subject and object continually shift places (84-102).²¹ Elizete refuses to be the object of Verlia's study or the subject of the text. She says, "I tell she I not no school book with she, I not no report card" (77). There is no controlling subject to create an "I" that can hold the gaze. Further, desire is not created in the distance between "I" and "you" but in the act of touching that makes new sense that belongs to neither the subject nor the object but emerges as the space of connection that changes the 'original' constitution of both.

An intersubjective language emerges as the connection between signs begin to make desiring sense in their contextual interrelation. Verlia's leap and Elizete's arm meet in the *différance* of signs that arc to inscribe the erotic intensity of a political and embodied revolutionary war machine of lesbian desiring production. Verlia's body forms "a faultless arc to the deep turquoise deep" (247). A desire, which is neither the property of Verlia nor Elizete but a production between the two, leaps as Verlia's sight touches Elizete's arm that arcs in a becoming-cutlass of "avenging grace." Between Verlia's political abstraction and Elizete's deterritorializing materiality, the intersubjective sign of

²⁰Verlia says, "Look Elizete, don't try and seduce me. I don't believe in seduction. If you're coming you come with your head clear. Seduction is a thing between a man and a woman. There is no seduction between women. This is harder" (74). Brand inscribes seduction in chains that link to an assimilation with the oppressive valuation of black people in Canada, a lazy language, a deadly nostalgia that defers the need to change social and economic conditions (182), and a colonizing desire for sugar, for "donut smelling walking death sepulchral ice" (149).

²¹I discuss Elizete's resistance to the psychoanalytic concept of a desiring violence and distance in chapter 12, "Quantum Energy in Molecular Dialectics."

the “arc” cuts through many kinds of violence: the imbrication of slavery in the imperialist economy of sugar cane, a masculinist cane (whip) of misogynist abuse in Rastafarian resistance to imperialist oppression, the theory of the development of the subject through categorical distinctions, the organization of intersubjects and language as objects that can never speak the real, and the distinction between materiality and abstract thought:

That she would fall in love with the arc of a woman’s arm, long and one with a cutlass, slicing a cane stalk and not stopping but arcing and slicing again, splitting the armour of cane, the sweet juice rushing to the wound of the stem. That the woman would look up and catch her looking and she would hate herself for interrupting such avenging grace.

What made her notice that she was the one needing was that grace, that gesture taking up all the sky, slicing through blue and white and then the green stalk and the black earth. Anyone who did that all day, passed through everything that made up the world, whose body anchored it, arc after arc after arc, who was tied to the compulsion of its swing, who became the whirl of it, blue, white air, green stroke, black dust, black metal, black flesh. . . . each person . . . caught up in their own arc of metal and dust and flesh until they were a blur, whirring, seeming to change the air around them. (202-03)

The intensity of movement within unstable material elements of colour, bodies, earth, and cane changes the machete from a tool of capitalist gain into a weapon of assault. As quantum elements whirling at the speed of light, these deterritorializing bodies enact a

revolutionary energy that changes the real, by changing the air, changing the context for the production of meaning. Their materialist resistance in the smooth, nomadic space of holey ground connects with the abstract, striated space of an organized theory of Marxist liberation from the oppression of capitalist exploitation. As the smooth and the striated spaces meet (both within and between Verlia and Elizete), the intensity of connection speeds up as it leaps on an erotic connection between a material and an abstract woman's arm and body that arc in delirious revolutionary movements.

The affective inscription of revolutionary energy as the arcs of a lesbian body without organs that becomes-machete "slicing the cane" with "avenging grace" opens a decolonized space in the originary signification of slavery. This enables Brand to inscribe a desiring theft of sugar in the time-lag that displaces the colonization of the deterritorialized meeting of bodies and languages. For Verlia, the territorial mouth of oral nourishment is "not enough" since it is already contaminated by the psychoanalytic theory of an originary bodily drive, already colonized as a hunger created in capitalism for the colonizer's displaced dream of Demerara sugar and Klim milk (121).

The deterritorialized decolonization of languages, bodies, intersubjects, and thought produces the virtual flash of "grace" that appears as a temporary element in a quantum world. In "Unredeemed Grace," Eva Tihanyi asks Brand what "grace" means. Brand responds:

Respite. A moment like honey, like clarity, a stop, a silence. And for the characters, it's when something ceases. Strife ceases. It's *unexpected* honey, unexpected silence. It's not redemption because not everything is solved. It's a

moment of clarity for which they are utterly grateful. It isn't continuous. It's a moment of sight, of being sightful. (9)

Brand deploys this seizure/caesura of time to evacuate colonizing and commodifying meaning. She seizes the "sugar" that enables capitalism to recuperate the surplus energy of the worker and gives it back to the black lesbian body without organs who produces it. As Brand says, the evacuation is temporary. The painful oppression is not erased: "... the cane boiling smell sweet, sweet, sweet and . . . I hear she say rock-stone cold, 'You know how much of our people buried under this field. . . . The field gurgle, the smoke from the factory so sweet it stink, my blood crawl from Verlia' certainty'" (83-84). But temporary seizures are made to inscribe an intensity with the surplus energy and water-drenched sweat of a labouring becoming-machete whose blood infuses the fields of cane with lesbian desiring connections: "I see she. Hot, cool and wet. I sink the machete in my foot, careless, blood blooming in the stalks of cane, a sweet ripe smell wash me faint. With pain. Wash the field, spinning green mile after green mile around she. See she sweat, sweet like sugar" (3-4). An affirmative creation, a becoming greenness (Verlia), appears in the negation of such divisive categorical oppositions as subject/object, body/language, and pain/joy that can suppress the different sense of their unspoken interconnections.

An irreducible surplus energy also emerges as the *différance* between the masculinist, Eurocentric, poststructuralist death of the subject and the lesbian becoming-machete that has no subject but creates intersubjects in desiring relation. Masculinist, Eurocentric poststructuralism appears as the colonizing signification of sugar that Brand encodes as the assimilation into whiteness of Verlia's aunt and uncle in Sudbury who

provide her the empty nourishment (the empty signs) of “donuts” (148-49).²² Like Elizete’s act of infusing Adela’s empty signs of absence with water, the sweat of the labouring lesbian-becoming-machete infuses new sense in the evacuation of a commodified, originary representation. “Something” — not Elizete who is not an originary subject in her first-person narrative — says to Elizete, “Verlia is your grace” (5), and “I take it, quiet, quiet, like theifing²³ sugar. From the word she speak to me and the sweat running down she in that sun” (3). The “grace” of Brand’s desiring writing is not just a dialectical leaping between positions that remain sedimented in the already spoken or a nihilist negation of all meaning. Instead, “grace” opens a linguistic space of quantum insubstantiality that forms delirious connections of unreading (“*délire*”) and deconstructing the oppressive organization of the already thought and mastered. With quantum intensity, she enacts an affirmative negation that spins off to “another place, not

²²This desire for the white death of donuts and dark Demerara sugar (121) made with the sweat of labouring black bodies resonates with Jamaican dread poet/musician Mutabaruka’s protest against the disgrace of “ice cream” and “junk food,” the empty food of capitalism, “filling up the place” in his poem/song “Junk Food.” Yet Brand’s desiring writing does not stop with the negation of resistance but twists the meaning in a theft of “sugar” that enables a becoming present of desire as creation of the new, not just the eradication of the old.

²³ Yes, Brand spells the word “theifing” here, although she also writes the word “thief” elsewhere (14, 83), and no, I am not going to put *sic* here or anywhere else. Following Derrida’s theory that meaning has no originary intent but is what comes about as a modification, I leave the question of intentional or unintentional error aside. A theft of language has to transgress rules. In a passage below, I also cite the material typography of the text, although I have no way of proving whether this is the publisher’s inscription or Brand’s intent. I cite the typography because the capitalization opens the sense of “grace” not only as a concept but as the name of a woman as well and thus enacts the ghostly sense of a black lesbian “elsewhere” that comes through the gaps of what is not solidly reified in the text.

here” in the unthought of a rhizomatic music. Brand says that, if Toni Morrison is an influence at all, what she likes most about her writing is the way she is able to evoke the whole novel in her opening paragraph.²⁴ That the words “GRACE. IS GRACE, YES. And I take it, quiet, quiet, like theifing sugar” are the first words of *In Another Place, Not Here* underscores the importance of Brand’s strategy of displacing the propriety of the colonizing word to create a new drift of sense in a lesbian desiring writing.

²⁴Dionne Brand made this comment to me during the launch of *At the Full and Change of the Moon* in Edmonton. I asked her about the influence of Toni Morrison, which Joan Thomas suggests in what seems to me a presumptuous gloss of literary, sexual, and political difference because they both examine issues of race and gender as a ghostly haunting that is inscribed on the individual by pain (see Morrison’s *Beloved*). Brand qualified her initial response that she has not been influenced by Morrison with the above statement.

Part V. Conclusion

Chapter 14. Poststructuralist Intersubjectivity

In this dissertation, I have examined the ficto-theory in Nicole Brossard's *Le désert mauve*, Daphne Marlatt's *Taken*, and Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* in relation to their other works and to several of the reigning deconstructive, poststructuralist theories. This transgressive investigation has enabled me to formulate a new, affirmative poststructuralist theory of a deconstructive desiring intersubjectivity that replaces the death of the subject in radical writing by Canadian and Québécoise lesbian-feminist writers. To develop this theory, I rely on an intersubjective process: certain points of connection between the radically different deconstructive theories and ficto-theories enable me to leap across the differences and ignite the deconstructive crisis that not only reveals the limits of each theoretical scope but provides the destabilization of categorical location necessary for the development of new thought in an interlanguage.

The lesbian-feminist intersubjectivity in these novels deconstructs heteropatriarchal values that persist in the political organization of thought and desire through a particular construction of founding absence. While a particular sign of corporeality or narrative means nothing in itself in a poststructuralist intersubjectivity (it has no innate meaning), it begins to make sense in relation to other signs that include other corporeal signs, as well as signs from different sign systems such as national languages, diverse narratives, and even landscapes. To dismiss bodily sense as meaningful only in relation to linguistic and social coding yet accept linguistic and social coding as meaningful without corporeal inscription enacts what Deleuze and Guattari

identify as an imperialism of language that enables systemic regulation by reterritorializing a completely deterritorialized abstraction. Because bodies are not singular, the signs of corporeality can begin to make sense in deregulated interrelation between individuals and in relation to other sign systems within individuals.

Nietzsche's Dionysiac philosophy that locates unconscious chaos in a prelinguistic body connects with the heterogeneously disorganized bodily drives (Kristeva) and unknowable 'real' (Lacan) of originary subjects in psychoanalysis. Because this absent originary subject is in each case corporeal, the poststructuralist death of the (originary) subject often explodes corporeal materiality as an impossible and essentialist outside. The poststructuralist evacuation of foundational truths leads to the concept that the 'subject' (always within quotation marks in such theory) returns only as the residual effect of grammatical organization. While the originary subject is reduced to a fictional construction, the echoing presence of such absence, combined with corporeal excision, resonates with Jacques Lacan's idea that the speaking subject can never know the 'real' outside the linguistic organization of the castrating law-of-the-father. Derrida pushes such linguistic regulation further, arguing that not only is it unknowable but "*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*." In poststructuralist thought, the evacuation of originary presence disables Kristeva's argument for different corporeal subjectivities by criticizing her reliance on a theoretically exploded, essentialist outside. But, as the end of thought about bodies and outsides, such closure enacts what Lyotard argues is a tyranny of the speech act. What if the surfaces, the signs of systems such as languages, bodies, landscapes, individuals, are already heterogeneous and disorganized? Not only what if there were no

originary subject, a founding premise of poststructuralist agreement, but what if there were also no effect of the subject necessarily organized by language and social relations? What if corporeality speaks in language and vice versa without categorically dividing the two or establishing one as the originary location of intent?

In “Toward a Desiring Intersubjectivity,” I have discussed the various theoretical positions I have negotiated to develop a theory of affirmative, poststructuralist intersubjectivity. The political radicalism of continental deconstruction inscribes an affirmative difference in an interwoven Québécoise and Canadian lesbian and feminist poststructuralism that resists the fragmentation of mainstream North American deconstruction. The affirmative creation of new, mobile intersubjects out of already scattered parts also responds to feminist resistance in Europe and North America to a masculinist, poststructural dissolution of the subject on the grounds that a female subject has never had such central, speaking, desiring, and organizing propriety that she needs decentring. Yet an intersubject also has no originary subject, cannot be defined as a prelinguistic positivity, stable substance, or essence, and, thus, remains poststructuralist. The interaction of particles that create an intersubject are contingent and change meaning and substance depending on the context. Further, the particles are, themselves, mutable and change during the interactions that form intersubjects as relations between bodies, between bodies and languages, literatures, narratives, histories, temporal differences, discourses, and theories. A desiring intersubject substitutes for nothing, which distances it from the resonance of castration that persists in Derrida’s discussion of language as a chain of supplements that have no original. By using Deleuze and Guattari’s anti-Oedipal

theory of desire, without fidelity to the whole of their thought, I am able to inscribe intersubjectivity as the continuous desiring production of new becomings, thoughts, positions, languages, and bodies. Such desiring intersubjectivity lacks nothing: it begins to build what has never existed before and speak what has been unspeakable.

In my study of the novels, I have investigated what the absence of an originary subject means for these radical lesbian-feminist writers. Each author presents a very different kind of originary negation, but none of them relies on a prelinguistic subject or bodily *chora*. Brossard investigates the partial, heterogeneous elements of fiction that inscribe reality and can be used in different, unchained relations to change meaning and, thus, change reality. If one is no longer tied to a desire for reproduction of originary intent, even the homophobic and misogynist texts of Dante can be used in a lesbian desiring production that relies on no prelinguistic outside. Marlatt investigates hybrid spaces within and between corporeality and language that inscribe lesbian desiring interrelations that cross but do not transcend national and racial relations. Brand locates the entire production of the concept of an originary subject in the violent colonization of bodies, thoughts, and subjectivities that inscribes a nostalgic desire for absent originary presence. She negates the originary subject to enable a process of eradicating the colonizing abductions of bodies and sense without erasing the pain of politically inscribed absence.

Brand discusses the political colonization of bodies, thoughts, and subjectivities through the psychoanalytic concept of a split subject that provides an essentialist foundation for political imperialism. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the Oedipus split

generates an imperialist reterritorialization of individuals through the displaced graphism of language. Between the two articulations, one that takes account of historical acts of political imperialism and the other that theorizes linguistics, I can speak of the colonization of desire and between-women intersubjects without relying on an originary, prelinguistic, and precolonial body. Lacanian psychoanalysis evacuates the real, while a poststructuralist inscription that simply negates the corporeal, unknowable side of the binary inscribes the colonizer's desire as the effect of the real, which is all that is left after the originary subject is negated. In the past, I have been hesitant to call the political regulation of language *colonization* for fear of reducing the specificity of one nation's (or race's) colonization of another and because of the implication of a precolonial, originary subject. However, Brand's negation of the originary subject as a concept-metaphor developed through a psychoanalytic split that justifies diverse acts of Western and heteropatriarchal colonization enables me to link racial, national, and subjective colonizations without reduction of the specificities in each. Brossard, Marlatt, and Brand evade colonization by heteropatriarchal regulation by negating any proper, originary essence that reproduces the knowledge of categorical systems. They examine the potential of the always already heterogeneous signs of multiple corporealities and languages on the surfaces of diverse, deregulated sign systems to inscribe an insubstantial, nonrepresentational drift of quantum and molecular particles that also resist a lesbian colonization of desiring production.

Without an originary subject, the lesbian intersubjects that emerge in these novels have a nonfoundational basis. Yet each also resists the erasure of materialist and historic

realities by insisting on a multiplicity of strategic and contingent locations and foundations. Since the ‘foundations’ change in a micropolitics of contingent difference, they cannot have the unity or essence of an originary foundation. Instead, they have a quantum instability that enacts a catachrestic nominalism in the foundations of language and the historical real. This suggests a difference from what Butler and others call an “antifoundational” poststructuralism, since there are many shape-shifting foundations with no originary referent beyond the oppressive conditions of regulating systems and deregulating flights of mobile signs and inscriptions. The experience of a lived and living life, in this sense, is inseparable from the continual negotiations, collisions, and explosions between signs of different signifying systems. Bodies, languages, the attempted regulations of juridical and social values, literatures, histories, and theories are some of the molecular elements that lose the solidity of constituent substances and become quantum particles that speed up, spin off, and collide in new combinations to produce an intense “*délire*” on the “surfaces of sense” (Brossard).

Butler’s sense of an “antifoundational coalition politics” comes from a Foucauldian interpretation of the anti-systemic movement of knowledge and power. By changing Butler’s word *antifoundational* to *nonfoundational*, I find her discussion extremely productive in the development of a desiring intersubjectivity. As Butler argues, the members of a coalition do not have the identity of a subject and can have no statement of unity or intent until the action of the coalition is accomplished. The problem with the term *antifoundational* is that it loses specificity: nothing seems to matter. On the other hand, a *nonfoundational* coalition can enact the catachrestic nominalism of specific issues

that enter into a larger coalitional struggle. Each of the writers inscribes such a nonfoundational coalition politics of micropolitical agendas into the desiring connections that form lesbian intersubjects. Such coalitional intersubjectivity occurs within characters as a series of interactions between such elements as heterogeneous bodies, sexes, languages, theories, nations, races, classes, geographies, landscapes, histories, narratives, literatures, and oratures. The nonfoundational coalition of an intersubject also takes place between characters, which establishes the lesbian desiring intersubjectivity of each novel somewhere between the already heterogeneous, contradictory locations of each character. Further, the lesbian intersubjectivity of the text forms lines of mobile connection with the reader so that the intersubjectivity I describe here in each novel would never be identical to my intersubjective engagement at another time, since it would be inscribed by my own becoming someone else than I am now, with different intertexts, an aged or perhaps more youthfully vibrant cortex — generally, a different environment. Nor would the intersubjectivity I read here or later be the same as another critic's reading. The nonfoundational coalition politics of nonrepresentational intersubjectivity leaves the door open for difference to spark continually new production. Each of these writers suggests that this nonfoundational and nonrepresentational (nonobjectifying) space for the production of new sense inscribes hope for changing the world from the founding violence of a Hegelian opposition between 'I' and 'you,' self and other, speaker and spoken, subject and object, body and language. Rather than the Derridean call to a binary other, intersubjectivity produces the continuous becomings of alterity.

Such hope for nonfoundational change cannot come about through a utopian

displacement to another time, or another set of representational conditions, but must attack the violence and negate the negation that establish exclusionary and commodifying categories. An anti-Hegelian intersubjectivity cannot emerge as a meeting between oppositional categories until the solidity of such categorical containment dissolves into quantum energies and flows, where the one binary does not simply switch places with the other. Instead, they need to meet and produce something other than either original. Each of the literary writers in this study deploys such violence against the violence that forms the matrix for the emergence of the subject through the constitutive elements of gender, language, and the laws of social regulation. By attacking the organization of any subject (language, individuals, bodies, concepts), these writers develop poststructuralist intersubjects that resist the organizational violence that Butler and other poststructuralists argue makes a subject.

The negation of an originary subject, a nonfoundational politics of desiring production between different already heterogeneous sign systems, disciplines, and locations, and a violence against categorical enclosure that enables a desiring production of new becomings are what make the intersubjectivity that I discuss poststructuralist. As both nonrepresentational and nonfoundational, lesbian subjectivity in these novels cannot be defined as a substance. Instead, it is a desiring drift of affective energy that makes political and emotional sense in the meeting between heterogeneous signs of female bodies and languages. In a quantum speed and shape-shifting production, a lesbian desiring intersubjectivity changes the ghostly spectre of corporeal and female absence from language into a continuing series of mobile, becoming presents.

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